THIS NUMBER CONTAINS NINE SHORT STORIES.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 493. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 11TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

Edited by C. Arthur Pearson.

No. 493.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending June 11th, 1898.

A Dangerous Flirtation.

CHAPTER I.

"Cousin Mark, I must have that lovely spray of honeysuckle!"

"You have but to command, Cousin Sybil!" pulling up the chestnut mare in the lee of an old, moss-grown wall, over which a honeysuckle threw a reckless profusion of blossom.

They made a very pretty picture of Dignity and Impudence. The girl, with her piquant face and imperious outstretched hand, formed such a striking contrast to the man, whose stern profile and massive shoulders were eminently suggestive of quiet strength. Besides, the girl was in the first bloom of womanhood, while the streaks of grey on the man's temples showed his age to be nearer forty than thirty.

"I suppose you know it is a question of stolen goods, Sybil? Suppose, when we are calling, I betray you to the Heathcotes?"

"But I am not going to call—at least, not to-day."

"Sybil, you forget you promised my mother."

"Oh, well," resignedly, "I suppose I must go; but I wish Miss Heathcote and her brother were not such uninteresting old frumps," she added discontentedly, as the dog-cart drew up in front of an old two-storeyed house, half cottage, half bungalow.

"Master is out, but Miss Heathcote and Master Richard are in the garden," said the rosy-cheeked maid. "Will you walk this way, please?" ushering them through the low French window on to a verandah amply supplied with chairs.

"What a garden! I never saw anything so lovely," cried Sybil, gazing admiringly at the wilderness of flowers. Roses were everywhere—climbing up the pillars of the verandah, standing primly on bushes, or rioting in the wildest profusion over a rickety summer-house. No sound disturbed the drowsy summer silence save the hum of countless bees, till, suddenly, there came from the direction of the summer-house the clear sound of a woman's voice—"Dick, how dare

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you! Give it back to me this moment, you little wretch!" —then a rush, and a boy ran quickly down the garden, followed closely by a girl in a white dress. Up and down and in and out they raced, the boy brandishing an envelope above his head, the girl, flushed and panting, demanding its immediate surrender. They were utterly unconscious of spectators, till suddenly the boy doubled down a side path which brought him face to face with the group on the verandah. A moment later came Bee, flushed and panting, her white dress upheld in one hand, while with the other she was evidently trying to secure her loosened hairpins. At sight of the visitors Dick dropped the envelope, and, with a murmured exclamation of "Great Scott!" disappeared like a flash, while Bee went forward to greet her visitors with as much calmness as she could assume, while conscious of missing hairpins and flaming cheeks.

"Cousin Mark, Bee is delightful!" was Sybil's verdict as they were driving home an hour later, "and I mean to flirt desperately with the fossil brother and Dick."

"Do you?" said Mark smiling. "Then I hope you will be merciful as you are strong. And, by the way, Sybil, talking of flirting, I wish you would be careful how you treat Mr. Sebastian. You know I don't object to a little innocent flirtation, but with Mr. Sebastian it won't do; the game is too risky—he—he might think you meant it."

"And supposing I did?" glancing sideways at Mark's rather stern profile.

"Sybil!"

"Well!" petulantly, "one must have some excitement in this dull place, and Mr. Sebastian is handsome and a gentleman."

"Oh, yes, he's handsome enough, and he's a gentleman in a way, of course."

"But if he is only a gentleman 'in a way,' why did you have him here?"

"My dear girl, a man may be an excellent manager of a mine without being the sort of fellow one would like one's womenfolk to—er—er—"

"To carry on a desperate flirtation with?"

"Precisely; so I hope you will see the advisability of checking anything of that sort on Sebastian's part."

Sybil's big blue eyes scanned Mark's face with a curiously intent expression, as she said gently, "Do you care whether I flirt with Mr. Sebastian, cousin Mark?"

"My dear girl, of course I care. Haven't I just been explaining that one's womenfolk——"

"Oh, bother, there isn't time for a sermon; we are ten minutes late already," and without waiting for her cousin's assistance, Sybil jumped from the cart, ran lightly up the shallow steps of the Manor, and disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

Sybil had organised a picnic—"just as a mild protest against the general dullness of the neighbourhood, my dear," she had explained to Bee, with whom her friendship had advanced by leaps and bounds during the past six weeks. This was how it was that Bee found herself sitting with Sir Mark Rainford under the cool shade of the beeches in Eversham woods.

"I had no idea picnics were such pleasant affairs," said Mark, "and to think Mr. Heathcote was nearly depriving you of all this;" waving a comprehensive hand in the direction of the green aisles and dappled sunlight, "'for the sake of those old Egyptian buffers' as Dick so aptly puts it."

"Oh, you musn't blame George, he is so near the end of his second volume, you know."

"H'm, I see; ah, well, I suppose we old folks are all apt to be a little selfish."

"Do you consider yourself George's contemporary, Sir Mark?"

"Well, perhaps not exactly that. You see I haven't found an equivalent for the Egyptians yet, but I've no doubt I'm tending that way. By the way, Miss Heathcote, I often wonder at that calm, contented air of yours, which seems to ask nothing more of life than what you have—and yet——"

"And yet?"

"Well, somehow I had imagined a more eventful history for the enthusiastic, fiery little girl I left—let me see—how many years ago?"

"Thirteen," said Bee quietly, "thirteen this month."

"Not really?" sighing, "ah, yes, I remember it was in September. We were in the orchard and you had on a grey frock, and your fleece of hair shone in the sun when you gave me—something I valued very much; can you imagine what it was?"

"Something that I gave you before you went away?" raising a pair of questioning grey eyes.

"You don't remember?—Miss Heathcote—ah, I see you have not quite forgotten," watching the delicate pink flush mantle in Bee's cheeks in answer to his look.

"Oh, yes," the blush deepening, "but you must remember I was a very sentimental little girl, and, besides, it was such a long time ago."

"Yes, it was a long time ago," repeated Mark, idly plucking a handful of moss, "and now I have grown old."

"How absurd, a man of forty-five is in the prime of life!"

"Perhaps, in a sense; but he is too old for some things, nevertheless—for love, for instance."

"Is one ever too old for love?" murmured Bee dreamily.

"Miss Heathcote!—Bee!" eagerly, "do you think it possible that—but no! What have I to offer a young girl in exchange for her youth and love? Why, these grey hairs," passing his hand wearily over his whitened temples, "ought to have taught me more sense; and Sybil——"

The pink flush had gone from Bee's face, and it looked singularly white and drawn as she rose from her mossy seat and said, in a measured voice: "I'm sure you exaggerate your disadvantages, Sir Mark; many women would be quite willing to overlook your grey hairs."

"Perhaps; but supposing she has a fancy for someone else? Someone who knows how to write impassioned love letters, for instance?" glancing keenly at Bee's averted profile.

"A girl has many fancies, but they do not often last. After all," with a sad little smile, "what we women most crave for is the steady, honest love of a man—one tires of impassioned love letters when they are just the outcome of one's own love of excitement."

"Then you really think ——" making an eager step forward.

"That you must be patient and trust to time, Sir Mark."

"Time!"

"Time, indeed!" echoed a shrill voice just above Bee's head, "a nice idea you seem to have of it, Bee!

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You and Sybil promised to help Mrs. Mayfield with the tea at five o'clock, and I left her a moment ago simply raging because it was a quarter past, and neither of you had turned up!"

"Oh, Dick, I'm so sorry, I'll go at once. Have you any idea where Sybil is?"

"Sybil! Oh, she is mooning about with that Spanish chap in a boat on the mere."

Mark drew his brows together in a sudden frown as he murmured something about the chances of a thunderstorm, and strode off in the direction of the mere.

CHAPTER III.

A FORTNIGHT later Bee was listlessly gathering a few late roses, when she caught sight of Dick limping painfully down the garden path.

"Bee—Bee," he called in evident excitement, and his face looked singularly white and scared as Bee hurried to meet him.

"Dick, what is it?" anxiously, "have you hurt your knee again?"

"Yes, beastly nuisance—slipped as I was getting down Forwood's Bank. But never mind about my knee," sinking into a garden seat and wiping the perspiration from his white face, "that can be seen to presently."

"But, Dick——"

"Now, don't worry, old girl; I know what to do all right, and there is something much more important to think of just now.

"You remember my telling you about Sir Mark's row with the Spanish chap on the day of the picnic, when he annoyed Sybil and said she had led him on to think she cared for him, or some rot of that kind; and when Sybil told him she cared more for Sir Mark's little finger than Sebastian's whole worthless carcase, how he behaved like a chap in a melodrama, and swore that Sir Mark should never marry Sybil?"

"Yes, yes, I remember," acquiesced Bee eagerly.

"I told you at the time that I didn't like the look of Sebastian when Sir Mark appeared on the scene, and after a tremendous row, suggested the manager sending in his resignation. Sebastian looked murderous, simply murderous; but I thought it was only a way these excitable foreigners have—until to-day," added Dick, almost in a whisper.

"Dick, what do you mean?" cried Bee, in a voice tense with anxiety.

"I'll tell you, but you mustn't interrupt me, old girl, for we have no time to waste," said Dick quietly. "Sir Mark came back from London last night, and was down at the mine this afternoon—they are sinking the new shaft, you know."

"Yes, yes, I know—go on."

"Well, Sir Mark told Mr. Sebastian that he wished to inspect the shaft this afternoon with the new manager. He said he might be a little late, but Sebastian could dismiss the men as usual, just keeping Barlow in the engine-room to work the cage. Sebastian answered in as few words as possible, and then turned on his heel and went back to his office. Sir Mark called me up just as he was getting into the dog cart, and asked me to tell Sebastian that he would be back about six o'clock to go down the shaft. I went to the office and knocked, but got no answer. So I just peeped through the pane of the inner office and saw——"

"What, Dick, what?" cried Bee in an agony of impatience.

"The Spanish chap on his knees by the safe, carefully examining what looked like—like a bomb—a dynamite bomb!" said Dick in a half whisper, as he wiped the drops of perspiration from his forehead.

"Dick, you must have been mistaken."

"No, I wasn't, I've seen scores of pictures of those things, and, besides, the Spanish chap was muttering something about 'That finishing Sir Mark's business for him; once down the shaft and then it would be easy——'"

"Dick, how horrible! Of course, you warned old Barlow and——"

"No, I just came up here. I thought the shortest way would be to meet Sir Mark on his way from Ringley, then there need be no fuss, you know.

"Then I slipped down that confounded bank, and had hard work to get here. However, if you hurry, old girl, you'll be in plenty of time. Thank Heaven it's a straight road, so you can't miss him. You will hurry, won't you, Bee?" his voice suddenly betraying the anxiety he felt.

Without waiting to reply, Bee sped up the garden path, rushed upstairs, flung on a hat and cloak, and started off down the Ringley road. It was a lonely road, bordered on either side by high hedges that loomed out like ghostly forms in the gathering dusk, but Bee had no room for minor terrors as she rushed blindly on. She had been walking for about half-an-hour when the sound of a horse's hoofs struck her ear, and in a few minutes a dog-cart, drawn by a chestnut mare, came trotting up. Yes, it was the Rainford dog-cart, but—Bee's brain reeled as she recognised the fact—it was empty, save for the groom. "Where is Sir Mark?" she said, her voice coming in sobbing breaths as she laid an imperious hand on the chestnut's bridle.

"Sir Mark is at the mine, miss; just set him down there a moment ago. 'E's gone to inspect the sinking of the new shaft with the manager—I mean the new man——"

But Bee gave him no time to finish his sentence.

"Then drive me there this moment," she cried, jumping quickly into the cart. "Don't lose a moment, for the love of Heaven; your master is in danger!"

Young Dobson, who was Sir Mark's devoted slave, needed no second bidding, but turned the mare's head, and in a moment they were flying down the road in the direction of the mine.

"I thought Sir Mark was to meet the train at Ringley?" said Bee, when she recovered her breath.

"Yes, miss, but we met the telegraph boy with a wire, mentioning the 5.30 to Barford, miss, so we turned at the cross-roads."

When they arrived at the mine: "Go to the engine-room and tell them to bring up the cage at once, and then follow me," she said quietly, and sped up the incline in the direction of the new shaft. Bee looked eagerly round; the wheels and machinery of the mine looked strangely black and weird silhouetted against the evening sky, but there was not a sign of Sir Mark, nor indeed, of any human being.

Stay! What was that? Was it a man, crouching over the mouth of the shaft and apparently gazing down into its depths?

Bee's heart stood still, as she recognised the Spaniard. In another moment she had reached his side, just as he stood erect, and, raising something in both hands, made as though he would hurl it down the shaft.

Quite silently, but with a spring like a panther, Bee threw herself on him from behind; there was a man's

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hoarse cry of baffled rage, a deafening explosion, and then, silence.

A moment later the cage came rapidly to the surface of the shaft, and Sir Mark Rainford jumped out, while the young groom, followed by several miners, came running up the slope.

"What has happened? Good Heavens! Miss Heathcote!" cried Mark, in horror-stricken tones, as he bent over the girl's prostrate form. "Here, fetch a doctor, one of you. Does anyone know how this happened?"

"If you please, Sir Mark, Miss Heathcote—she stopped the car, and told me to drive 'er 'ere. She seemed kind of frightened like, and said something about danger to you, sir; she jumped out of the cart, told me to go to the engine-room and 'ave the cage raised at once, and then flew up this 'ere slope. I began to get scared like, and so I 'urried up after 'er, when I see——"

"Well?" impatiently. "Go on, man."

"I see Mr. Sebastian, sir, a-standing over the mouth of the shaft with something 'eld above 'is 'ead. Miss 'Eathcote didn't waste no time screaming, or the like of that, but she just jumped on 'is back like a cat, and wrenched that 'ere bomb out of 'is 'ands."

"Bomb?" cried Mark.

"Yes, sir; at least when they fell together it exploded, and Miss 'Eathcote, she were thrown one way, and Mr. Sebastian——"

"Go on," said Sir Mark quietly, as he tried to force some brandy between Bee's white lips.

"Unfortunately, there ain't much doubt as to what has become of Mr. Sebastian, sir," said old Barlow at this juncture; "he must have fallen down the old shaft. The explosion broke away the iron railing, and I've just found his hat jammed among the twisted ironwork. Shall I see to the recovery of the body, sir?"

Mark nodded, and, motioning to a group of miners, Barlow withdrew.

CHAPTER IV.

"Is Miss Heathcote asleep, Dick?"

"Asleep? No; but she won't have the lamp lighted—prefers the firelight, you know. Shall I tell her you're here?"

"No; I can find my way, thanks. The little parlour, isn't it?"

Dick nodded acquiescence, and Sir Mark opened the door of the little parlour.

"May I come in?" he said quietly, pausing an instant to take in the picture of a cosy room, bright with the profusion of flowers, and a couch drawn up in front of a cheery fire, whose ruddy gleams lent a glow to the pale face lying among the cushions.

"May I come in?" repeated Mark.

It was not the firelight this time that gave the vivid crimson to Bee's cheek as she answered softly: "Come in, of course you may, Sir Mark. I wanted to see you so much, if only to thank you for all these lovely flowers," waving her thin hand in the direction of the bowls of roses.

"You want to thank me! That is rather turning the tables, isn't it? I was under the impression that it was I who had to thank you—for everything—life itself, in fact. Miss Heathcote, do you know you are a very brave young woman?" taking the girl's hand and gazing into the quiet depths of her eyes.

"Oh, don't let us talk about it, please, Sir Mark; of course anyone would have done the same, and as Sybil was not there I——"

"Sybil!" in accents of astonishment.

"Yes, I mean, of course, she would like to have been there instead of me, but——"

"As Sybil would probably have had an attack of hysterics, I think it was lucky for me she was not present. But what made you think of Sybil?"

"I thought—I mean—Sir Mark, you remember my telling you I thought your winning love was a question of time? Please let me finish," in answer to a gesture of astonishment from Mark. "Well, I have found out—I mean that you need not wait any longer."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that, at any rate," said Mark quietly, smoothing the ripples of Bee's dark hair.

"Sir Mark, what do you mean?" turning her glowing face towards him.

"Need you ask, Bee, my darling? Only that I love you, and it is happiness indeed to hear you say I need wait no longer to win your love," bending his bronzed face to meet hers.

"Please, don't, it is all a mistake. It is Sybil I meant. Oh, you must know!" a vivid crimson dyeing cheek, throat, and brow.

"Yes, I think I know all about it; but, as you say, it was all a mistake. It was you—not Sybil—whom I despaired of ever winning. Don't you understand, my darling?"

The answer was not audible, but was evidently satisfactory. There was a pause, filled up as lovers' pauses frequently are, and then:

"But, Mark, poor Sybil, how shall we ever tell her?"

"Perhaps we might leave that to young Festing."

"Mr. Festing, your new manager?"

"Yes, Sybil and he informed me the other day that life would be unendurable if they spent it apart, so I have given my consent—provided they are both in the same mind a year hence."

Another pause, during which the fire winked fitfully at the close proximity of the grey head and the brown.

"By the way, Bee, I can't help feeling rather sorry for the other chap."

"The other chap?" repeated Bee, bewildered.

"Yes, the writer of the impassioned love letters; I'm afraid you are rather a fickle little person, you know, for you seemed dreadfully keen on rescuing his letter from Dick——"

"Hullo! who's taking my name in vain?" cried Dick, entering the room at that moment. "What, no lights yet? Here, Mary, bring the lamp; I've brought you a letter, Bee," mysteriously, "from 'him.'"

"Thanks, Dick," languidly, holding out her hand.

"Hullo, young woman, you aren't as keen as usual about it; perhaps you would like me to read it aloud, or possibly, Sir Mark would oblige?"

"Yes, Dick, you can give it to Sir Mark," said Bee quietly.

"Whew!" whistled Dick. "Well, all I can say is, it is the first time anyone has been allowed to read Bee's poem before publication."

"Poem!" repeated Mark in astonishment.

"Yes, Bee's a blooming poet, writes things for the *Argus*, all about roses and cuckoos, and rot of that sort," said Dick with fine contempt. "However, in spite of her poetry and all that, Bee is not a bad sort of girl—taking her all round, you know."

"Just my own opinion, Dick, 'taking her all round, you know,'" repeated Sir Mark, as he quietly slipped his arm round Bee's waist.

Maud Coleborn.

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A Bid for a Presidency.

Sir Gaveston Basistow was an expert in mendacity, also an accomplished villain.

It was owing to his being endowed with the above characteristics that he left the chalk cliffs of Albion, together with a vast army of creditors, behind him, and betook himself to Truxillo, on the distant shores of Honduras.

Sir Gaveston Basistow had a good look round for a month or two on arrival, then being still penniless, and possessed of illimited impudence, he smiled to himself, and decided that Honduras was in every way congenial to his health, and suitable for the retrieval of his fortunes.

Chance favoured him a few days after his arrival, when he had the good fortune to save Antonio el Marcias from a band of roughs. From that hour the two fraternised.

Antonio was a señor whose reputation was shady; but what mattered that? Was not Basistow's equally so? Perhaps the baronet might have had qualms of conscience in accepting the friendship of the black sheep in question, had Antonio not been a man of reals. As it was, Basistow linked his arm familiarly through that of Antonio, jingled two five real pieces in his pocket, and talking of British freedom and future possibilities for Honduras, led Señor el Marcias to a certain *caba*, well-known to patriots as a place where they could converse with perfect safety on the—weather!

"See, Antonio *mio*," exclaimed the baronet, drinking a deep draught of wine, "You have reals, I have courage!"

"Ah, you have courage, *amigo*," sighed Antonio admiringly.

"I am an *Ingles*," remarked Basistow modestly. Then he continued musingly: "President Bogran is no wise ruler for Honduras. We came to that resolution weeks ago. In a week or two General Bogran will be——"

"Hush!" cried Marcias, glancing uneasily round.

"We are perfectly safe," retorted Basistow, smiling suavely. "Is not the *padrone* in the movement? Let me continue! In a week or two we shall interview the President—at what hour is quite immaterial to the present discussion. In all probability an hour or two before dawn would be most suitable, but this is merely by the way. I believe you do not want to come too prominently before the Honduras Government—just at present, eh, *amigo?*"

"No, *amigo*, I am too lazy."

"Quite so! Now listen! In a fortnight from to-day General Bogran"—he dropped his voice to a whisper—"will be as dead as Pizarro! Half his soldiers are in the movement. The flame of revolution will flare throughout Honduras the moment the general's hate has been rendered void by steel. *Amigo*, may I inquire who is to be the new President?"

"Do you think, señor, that I have been financing this revolution from a feeling of patriotism?"

"Such was my idea," replied Basistow mendaciously, helping himself to another glass of wine.

El Marcias smiled bitterly.

"My friend," he remarked gravely, "I gave you credit for greater perception. The future President is at this table!"

Basistow smiled languidly; then stretching out his hand, which Marcias grasped cordially, said:

"Thanks, *amigo*, thanks! I accept the post!"

El Marcias' face expressed blank amazement.

"*Amigo*, you mistake!" he whispered. "'Tis I who will replace General Bogran!"

"You?"

"Precisely, myself."

"*Amigo*," replied Basistow sternly, leaning across the table, "it is time we talked sense; I am risking my neck day by day by mixing in this revolution. If the game were spoilt who would suffer? Why, myself! Being the recognised leader—your name wouldn't even be mentioned in the affair. If I run this affair, with my life in my hand, I'm going to get the reward. Money is what you want, Antonio, and you shall have it in the form of land. But I reserve the Presidency and the handling of the Honduras treasury for myself."

"I refuse!" replied El Marcias warmly. "I've spent a fortune in this affair!"

"I can't help that!" replied Basistow coolly. "You'l get it all back with interest when I'm President."

"Impossible, my friend! I have set my heart on being President of Honduras!"

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"So have I! Odd, isn't it? Do you think I'm going to settle General Bogran for your benefit?"

El Marcias glanced gloomily at his companion.

"I have paid you to do so!"

"Paid? Pooh! Do you think money will pay me for risking my life for two whole months? No, friend; rest assured that it will not. You may have all Honduras, except a few miles, but I reserve the Presidency."

"And if I refuse?"

"I shall carry it through by myself, or else spoil the revolution."

El Marcias thought deeply for a few moments; then, lighting a cigar, remarked meditatively:

"Your method of carrying on Honduras politics is commendable, if somewhat novel; yet, if I may dare say such a thing, your policy has a flaw."

"Possibly; most policies have flaws," Basistow replied, yawning. "What is the flaw you see?"

"*Myself.*"

"Indeed?"

"At the present moment you are the leader of the Revolutionists. You follow me?"

"Perfectly."

"If anything were to come out about it, the person who told tales would gain honour and riches, while the leader of the Revolutionists would——"

"Suffer for his patriotism," interrupted Basistow.

"I see you appreciate the position," remarked El Marcias suavely. "Shall I continue?"

"By all means."

"It is possible that the informant might gain the highest position of trust in the Republic, provided, of course, he was a man of means. He might then, when the time was opportune, desiring to become a president, remove the ruler of the State! Do you follow me?"

"Perfectly," replied Basistow, with a smile; "but those nice little plans might be upset."

"True," answered El Marcias thoughtfully. "How do you suppose they could?"

"Well, a knife tickling the would-be informant between the shoulder blades might induce him to change his mind," remarked Basistow. "What is *your* opinion?"

El Marcias shrugged his shoulders.

"Have an absinthe with me? I desire to drink your health—the health of the new President of Honduras!"

"Señor, I accept the absinthe and the toast." Basistow replied smilingly, "and will now tell you something. I have arranged that General Bogran shall die *to-night*."

"To-night?" echoed El Marcias. "To-night? You jest, of course. You mean two weeks hence?"

"I mean what I say!" retorted Basistow sternly. "Are you not aware that he is at this moment in Truxillo, at the house of Don Ipeo Mercedez?"

"No, *por Dios.*"

Basistow smiled compassionately at him, then remarked:

"*Amigo*, you have but a poor head to manage a revolution. When one carries one's life in one's hand, an enemy's movements should never be missed. No, not even the most trivial. The blow will be struck at midnight. I shall await you at a quarter before the hour, in the Plaza Santa Anna. *Buenos.*"

They bowed nearly to the ground; then Basistow sauntered away, leaving Antonio el Marcias alone.

"Carmilita," he cried, addressing a waitress a few yards from him, "an absinthe. *Por Dios*, an unmannerly boor. Still, I am the price of an absinthe the richer. *He* a President? Fool that he is to speak so soon—he should have waited longer before he proved himself dangerous! As it is——"

He finished his sentence by smiling enigmatically.

* * * * *

The hour of midnight rang out clearly on the still night air.

Antonio had as yet not appeared on the silent plaza, deserted but for the motionless figure of Sir Gaveston, who, beneath the shadow of the statue of Santa Maria del Pilar, awaited the arrival of El Marcias.

The quarter past chimed in cracked notes across the silent city before Antonio appeared.

"Confound you, man; you're late," growled the baronet. "You are enough to ruin any revolution! Do you know that the revolutionary force of Truxillo are only waiting to hear the report of my revolver before they revolt openly?"

"I was detained!" murmured Marcias apologetically.

Basistow sneered; then shrugged his shoulders and pushed forward at a rapid rate in the direction of the house of Don Ipeo Mercedez.

The door was slightly ajar. Pushing it open, Sir Gaveston entered cautiously, followed by El Marcias, closed the door quietly, when they were challenged:

"Ah, Pedro!" whispered back the baronet. "Is all safe?"

"As the grave, señor," replied Pedro in a low voice. "Who is with you?"

"A friend, *amigo*! A doctor to see if Bogran's heart beats the same an hour hence as it does now!"

The door-keeper sniggered softly, and stood aside to let the two men pass.

Cautiously the pair crept along the passage and up the stairs, and came to a halt in front of the door of the President's bedroom. Here Basistow took an oil-can from his pocket, and carefully commenced to oil the hinges and the lock before he attempted to open the door.

"An instant's precipitation will spoil our plans!" muttered the baronet, gently turning the handle.

A loud creak answered his remark; the lock was evidently rusty.

Great beads of perspiration stood out on his brow as he heard the noise. Gripping the butt of his revolver, he placed his ear against the keyhole and listened.

Silence reigned, disturbed only by the snoring of the unsuspecting President.

"Thought I had mulled the affair then," muttered

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Basistow in a relieved tone of voice, as he carefully oiled the lock again.

Replacing his revolver in his belt, he drew his bowie-knife.

"Steel is safer than shot!" he whispered in the ear of El Marcias in so sinister a voice that that worthy recoiled. "It makes no noise, you know!"

Once more he turned the handle. This time it answered the touch of his hand without creaking. Gripping the haft of his knife more tightly than before, he pushed the door cautiously open, peered furtively round, then entered the apartment on tip-toe.

By the light of the moon, then at its full, the revolutionists were able to see the bed on which slept the President. He was sleeping restlessly, his arms outside the solitary sheet which formed his only bed covering. His face, ghastly pale, was turned towards a chair on which a revolver lay within easy reach of the sleeper.

"*Dios!* Sleep ever rests lightly on the suspicious," remarked Basistow in a whisper. "Still, light as it is, it will serve my purpose!"

El Marcias' face was ghastly in its pallor, his form trembled like an aspen, as with hands clenched he followed Basistow, who, creeping forward, approached the bedstead of General Bogran.

"If he should wake," muttered Basistow thickly, "I should have to fly, and lose all!"

He raised the knife above the sleeper's chest; then El Marcias sprang forward, and, seizing the weapon from the grasp of the amazed baronet, shouted in a loud, resonant voice:

"Bogran, awake! Your life is threatened!"

"You blackguard!" shouted Basistow furiously, grasping El Marcias by the throat with a grip of iron, as the President, leaping from his bed seized his revolver and stood irresolute, uncertain how to act.

Like a flash it dawned across the baronet's brain how he could score against El Marcias.

Banishing the thought of stabbing the President where he stood, an attempt which would have been rendered abortive by the presence of Bogran's guards, who, hearing the noise of a *mêlée*, had rushed in, he cried:

"Help! This man has attempted the life of General Bogran! I denounce him!"

El Marcias fought like a tiger at bay, but being no match for the athletic baronet, found his level in a very short space of time on the ground. In a second he was disarmed of Basistow's knife, which he still held in his hand, and bound.

The baronet leant against the bedpost, breathing hard. He had a strong desire to be theatrical.

"Excellency!" he gasped, pointing to the pinioned man. "I denounce that man as a revolutionist. By merest chance I passed down the street, and saw him creep into this house. I—I followed and—was just in time!"

"But the sentry?" exclaimed Bogran. "Where was he?"

"Away! Perhaps he has fled!"

One of the President's guards testified that Pedro was not at his post when he had passed a few minutes before.

"Excellency!" cried El Marcias, almost choking with passion. "He lies— he——"

"Silence!" interrupted Bogran in a terrible voice, then, turning to the guard, continued: "Let him be shot at once!"

"Mercy! He lies—he——"

"Silence him!" interrupted the General; then, as a soldier did as he was bid with the end of a rifle and dragged him out of the room, Bogran turned to the baronet, saying: "Señor, words are too feeble to express my thanks for this signal service. A deed shall prove my gratitude. Which would you prefer, wealth or position?"

"Being very short of money, I should prefer the former," replied Basistow genially.

"So be it. Good-night! Have you a cigarette?"

Basistow opened his case, and, as the President selected one, a rattle of musketry without announced the execution of Don Antonio el Marcias.

The following morning Basistow received a draft on the Truxillo branch of the Banque Nationale for 700,000 reals, which he promptly cashed.

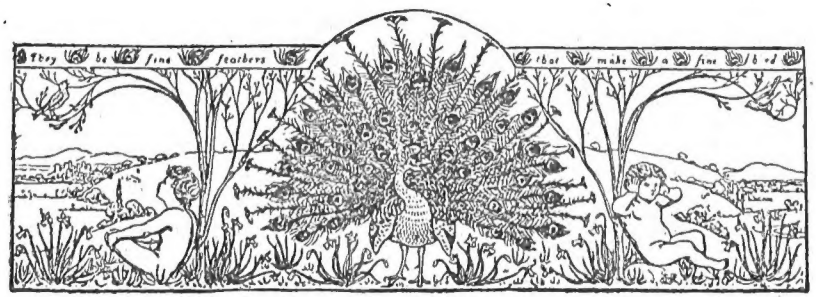
The day after, the house of El Marcias was searched from attic to basement, with the result that a quantity of letters bearing the signature of Sir Gaveston Basistow came to light.

The perusal of the correspondence in question induced a smart body of infantry to visit the house where Sir Gaveston lodged.

The landlord met them with open arms, called on every saint in the calendar to bless them, and then inquired their business.

On hearing what it was, he informed them that he was much grieved, but that the *hidalgo* had sailed the previous day with the cash.

TRISTAM K. MONKE.



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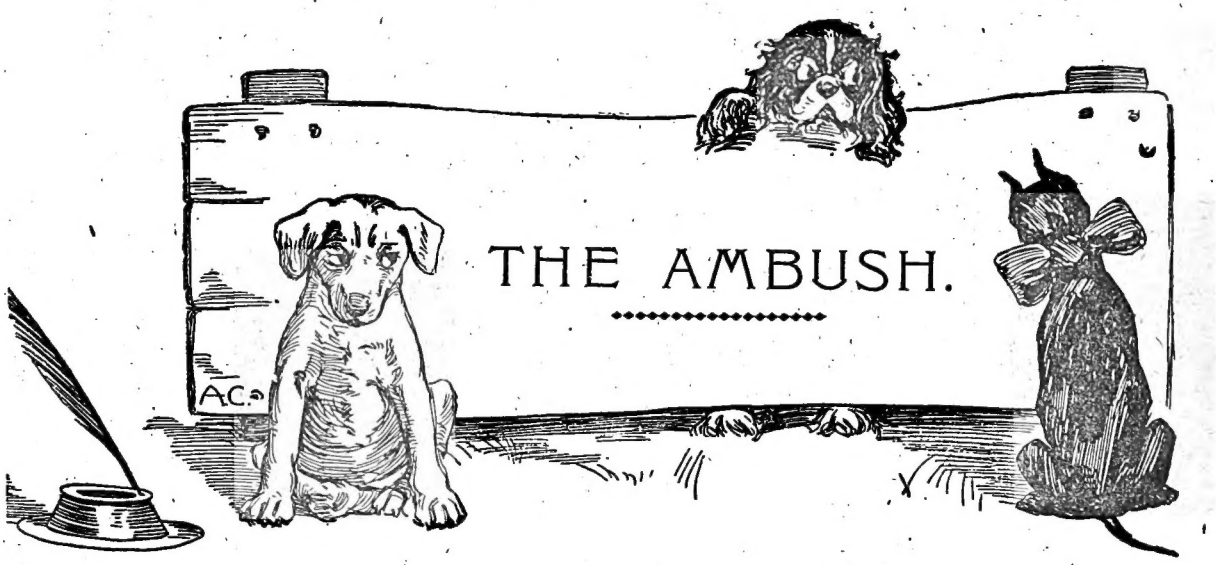

THE AMBUSH.

"Pigol! Artaud! Didier!"

Each man answered "Present" as his name was called, and, rising from his straw bed, took his rifle from the rack, and went silently out into the court.

Five o'clock struck from the steeple of a distant church, each stroke vibrating with a dismal sound.

Without a word the sharpshooters drew up before the half open door of the post, through which came puffs of warm air, and whose windows were dimly lighted by the rays of a petroleum lamp. There were ten men, their hands in their pockets, their guns hanging from the shoulders by a strap, the collars of their jackets turned up, and shivering from the first contact with the cold morning air.

At a distance, by the walls of the farm, a sentinel was pacing up and down, peering into the menacing darkness, with ears alert for the vague sounds of the country. He saluted with a "Good luck, comrades!" and after halting a moment to watch us descend towards the Meuse by a path leading through a little hollow, continued his monotonous promenade.

We followed the bank of the river. The water flowed beside us with an intermittent splashing and a gentle rustle against the rushes. We could see nothing distinctly. The river and the town were asleep, and the fields and sky seemed blended in a uniform tint of Indian ink.

My men marched without speaking a word, and with the cautious wariness that proximity to the enemy gives to the bravest. At such a time, when plunging into an unknown danger, there are few but would feel a shiver run through them, and I, myself, having tolerably excitable nerves, feverishly fingered my sword knot beneath my cape.

When we passed our last outpost we halted, and in a few words I explained to my men the work which lay before us.

Every morning at daybreak a platoon of Uhlans made a round between Warcq and Darmouzy, two towns occupied by a Prussian observation corps. They were seen to file quietly along about twelve miles in advance of their lines. We had orders to lie in ambush for them in the woods of Etourneaux, through which they had to pass.

We soon left the towing path and cut across the fields, by a difficult ascent, where our feet sank in the long grass.

The wind had risen, driving away the clouds, and a dim light fell from above. About two hundred yards before us a dwelling outlined itself—the farm of Grael, recently burnt to prevent the Prussians from establishing themselves there.

One soldier was sent forward to scout, and went off like a hare, crouching and using the greatest caution. From the ditch where we were hidden, with weapons ready, we watched him for some time; then he disappeared in the dusk. In about five minutes he returned, having seen nothing suspicious. Then we crossed the courtyard of the farm. Only the four walls were still standing, but half crumbled away; the burnt *débris* crushed under our feet, and a strong smell of smoke almost choked us. Perfect silence reigned—the silence of new ruins, where life has not yet had time to graft itself upon the death of former things.

A grey light appeared in the horizon; the wind wafted us the sound of a clock striking the half-hour, and the voices of cocks saluting the dawn.

As we reached the wood the day began to break. We marched in single file along an indistinct path, obstructed by overhanging branches which scratched our faces or fell with a dry crack. The dead leaves, blown here and there by a puff of wind, awakened echoes in the wood; then again all was silence.

"Halt!"

The sun rising behind us in the fog threw a red light across the coppice, and the dew sparkled on the borders of the leaves. An early chaffinch sang above our heads.

Stationed on the bank overhanging the road, some of the sharpshooters squatted on their heels and hastily ate a piece of bread or drank a swallow of brandy; the others waited, lying on their stomachs, their elbows buried in the moss. They all looked serious, with pinched noses and set lips.

Daylight increased. Already we could see the white trunks of the birch trees, looking like stiff phantoms among the mottled foliage. The morning dampness penetrated me to the bone in spite of my cape, and I

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dozed with my eyes open, made light-headed by the odour of the moist leaves and the anticipation of the coming fight; odd dreams and fantastic hallucinations wandered through my brain, and tangled rings of Uhlans seemed to dance around me. After many wakenings, I mechanically drew out my watch—the hands seemed stationary, for they moved with such exasperating slowness.

"Lieutenant," a sergeant whispered in my ear, "there they come—there they come!" I drew myself up. "Attention, comrades! On no account fire without the word of command. Our lives depend upon it. Do you understand?"

The trot of the horses became more and more distinct. Suddenly it ceased. The Prussians consulted together before entering the Etourneaux woods. Soon one of them rode forward as a scout, revolver in his hand, and passed about ten paces before us—a handsome fellow, sitting upright on his horse, whose crupper was covered by the long cape—his colours, black and white, floating behind him in the wind.

He advanced a few steps, carefully scrutinising both sides of the road. He hesitated a moment and listened, then he drew up his horse's bridle, and almost immediately a whistle sounded, telling his companions that the road was clear.

From our shelter we could hear the Uhlans laugh and joke, chopping their harsh Teutonic syllables, and swearing at their sturdy Mechlenberg horses when they stumbled in the heavy leaves, wet with dew.

A strange emotion took me in the throat, as if a hand grasped me there. I certainly had no fear, but it seemed to me as if I was about to commit a cowardly act in killing these men by surprise, almost by treachery, without allowing them to defend themselves. Yes; I hated the Germans, those odious conquerors, whose halting places were marked by executions, pillages and arson, and yet there was a feeling stronger than myself, a supreme pity took possession of me, my flesh revolted, and I would have wished to beg for mercy.

They were plainly in view against the blue sky as they came towards us, their bodies shaking gently, their helmets securely fastened over their foreheads, the lance resting in the stirrup and held by a strap beneath. The scabbards of their swords clashed against their saddles, their horses' bits flashed in the green reflections of the wood, and the Uhlans continued to laugh and joke.

One was quite young, almost a boy, and did not laugh with the others. I noticed him especially, and thought of the mother he had doubtless left behind in Germany. I imagined a room, shining with neatness, with a large earthenware stove, the father seated in his easy chair smoking his porcelain pipe, and beside his table sat the mother and sister ravelling lint for the wounded. There is a knock. "Ah, it is the postman," cries the young girl joyfully. "News from brother," going quickly to open the door, while the mother rises hastily.

"Why, this is strange! It is not his writing!"

For a moment nothing is heard in the room, but the roar of the stove, and the rustling of the envelope hastily torn open—then the poor woman falls backwards with a loud cry: "He is dead! He is dead!"

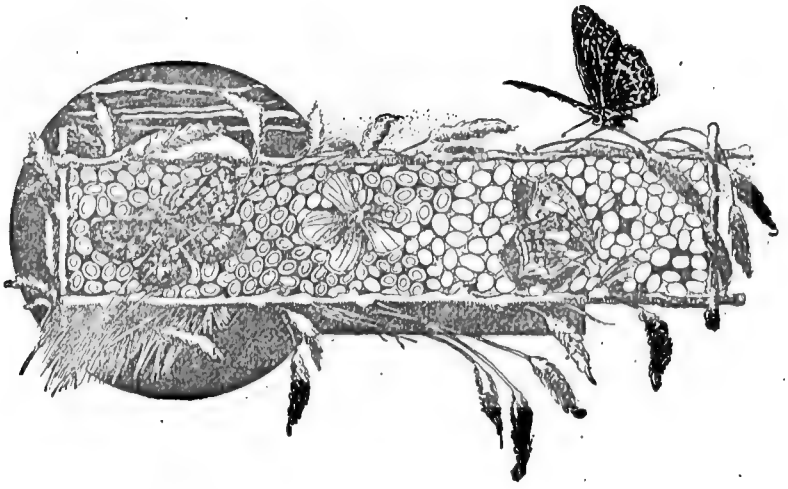
But now the riders were just passing us. There was no time to hesitate. I straightened up and gave the command:

"Fire!"

Ten reports sounded at once, together with cries of pain and the sound of furious galloping, then we perceived four men and two horses lying upon the road, mortally wounded, and among them the little Uhlan, with a bullet hole through his forehead, stretched upon his back with his legs apart, and his hands clinched. The others had turned horse and fled on a gallop towards Damouzy.

We returned without being molested, were cheered by our comrades, congratulated by our colonel, and received our orders for the day. But, in spite of all, there remained with me for a long time a nervous depression, a bitter memory—something like remorse for a duty fulfilled.

P. Labarrière.



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THE EMPRESS OF THE EARTH

THE TALE OF THE YELLOW WAR

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

CHAPTER XXXII. (*continued*).

THE consciousness of failure, of folly, thrilled through Hardy like a pain.

He had, in truth, lost the best possible chance.

"Well," he said after a minute, "and you have lost yours, too, Yen How."

"I will get you another time, boy."

"If I do not get you."

"Well, well," said Yen.

They had moved on a few steps—together. There was silence in the darkness. Already in the two men was working the strange law whose operation they were to feel for long hours that night: the Law which made it next to impossible to them to tear themselves one from the other.

Yen How hit upon the same half-sunken bench upon which Hardy had previously stumbled. Hardy put his foot upon it, and leant his elbow on his knee at one end. At the other Yen How sat down. Below them was the undulant spread of weed-patched sand, and the vague noising of the sea.

Yen How, who was smoking, took the cigar from his lips, and said:

"So you got away, after all?"

Hardy did not answer.

"*How* did you get away?" asked Yen.

"Heaven, I suppose, let me free, that I might strangle you yet, Yen," said Hardy.

"Poh!" said Yen How.

* * * * *

Minute after minute rolled by in a silence punctuated by the faint puffing sounds of Yen How's lips—a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes. Hardy was looking forth with wrinkled, speculative brow over the sea.

Yen How said:

"Did you have anything to do with the capture of the nine ships?"

"Which nine ships?" said Hardy.

"The Japanese war-vessels."

"Go to the devil, and ask me no questions."

"I suppose it was your doing, boy?"

"Perhaps."

"What have you done with them, then?"

"I have them."

"Not in Europe—come now."

"How do you know that?"

"I have searched."

"Europe is a good big place, Yen."

"Big, no. A green billiard-table, my son——"

"With pockets."

"So you have got them—in a pocket—really?"

"I may. There is no telling."

"If you had, you would not try to make me think that you had."

"Ah," said Hardy, of the two one fathom the deeper.

* * * * *

Caught in a sort of fascination, in a feeble, flaccid species of mutual mesmerism, they could not leave each other. Intense hatred and intense love are, of course, inverse forms of the same thing, and their manifestation is the same—an instinct for contact. A stab, a kiss—these are resultant varieties of the instinct. Through a grating a dog and a cat will maintain a mutual watch, lingeringly, for hours, averse to part. Here was something of that sort—a warfare and an attraction between a whale big as an ocean, and an elephant, monstrous, four-headed, big as a continent.

And as all grand intensities are elementary, simple, and resemblant to the passions of childhood, so the talk of these great men was not altogether unlike the wrangle between two bitter, lingering school-boys, sitting on a bench, with lumps in their throats—fastened together, unable to part.

There were few words, and a long interval, and few words, and a long interval. So a dark hour passed.

* * * * *

Hardy said:

"What a beast you must be, Yen, to torture a poor boy like that! What a sad beast!"

"Poh! You do not know anything. I had worse in store for you than that, boy."

"What an infernal reptile for God to make!"

"Abuse away! Your mind is not really first-class, after all. You are the slave of old, popular surface-ideas. A reptile is no worse than anything else, boy. If he is stronger than other things, he is better than they."

"Ah, well, if that were so, I should be glad, too, Yen. There is not much to choose between us, now, in that way."

"What, you are of the species, too, then?"

"Something of that sort, perhaps—if venom makes the reptile. It is your own fault. You have made me like yourself. By the Lord, I warn you, Yen How!"

"Poh! it is a question of strength, not of venom. You can be as venomous as you like. But what can you do?"

"Nothing perhaps; and perhaps something."

"Suppose you had a fleet to beat me at sea. Do you

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know how many I am sending over? All at once? You can't dream. Twenty Millions. What could you do with them? It would take you a year to shoot them all. But suppose you did; there will be some more hundreds of millions left. You cannot exclude the innumerable. What could you do with them? Be as venomous as you like, my son."

"Ten good men against a hundred million rats—I bet on the men."

"Poh! I bet on the rats."

"On the side of the men—Science."

"Science? What sort of Science?"

"The Science of the gun-maker, of the tactician, of the—"

"Well?"

"Need I say it?"

"Yes, say it."

"Of the—Chemist."

And at the word Yen How started as though pricked by a goad. He said nothing.

* * * *

"But, after all, you are a fool, Yen."

"Ah! How so?"

"Well now, I suppose you are a learned sort of dog. You know Science, I dare say; you know History, and on what trajectory the world has run so far. But it seems to me—can it be that you have really never caught a glimpse of the one big, fugitive thing?"

"And you, my son?"

"Yen! sometimes it hits me straight in the eyes in one blinding flash of lightning — a momentary flash, happily, for no staggering eye-ball could bear it long."

"Ah! And what is it you see?"

"A tendency in the world—the hell of a current — a secret design, Mr. Chinaman."

"Well, suppose I have seen it, too, boy, or guessed it? Why call me a fool?"

"Because this invasion of yours is not in accordance with the tendency so far; and the tendency is jolly strong!"

"You think the tendency is English in trend; and I say it is Chinese; that's all."

"I'll swear it is not Chinese, Yen How."

"Well, I don't care. Tendency or no tendency. Poh! A tree has a tendency to grow, all the universe is trying to make it grow—but how if *I* come with a saw and cut it down, my son?"

"*If* you cut it down, yes. But if it is older than that old sea there, and has in it the toughness of eternities, and is as wide as the girth of the earth. . . ."

A murmur of contempt came from Yen How. But his left eye glanced a moment upward at the darkened heaven.

"But what is it you are doing here, my son? How if I have you captured, now?"

"You cannot. I have help near. I could more likely capture you."

"I would not be easily captured, you know. But what is it you want here, sir?"

"I received your present of the child's heart. I came to make you one in return. I have dropped it inside the window of the house yonder."

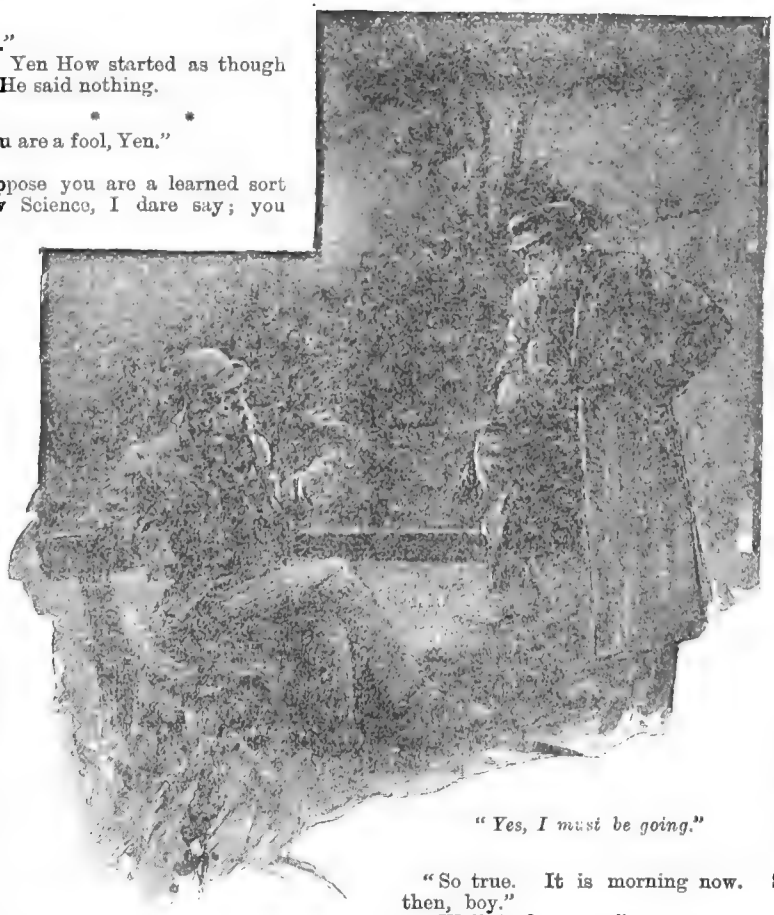
"Ah, what present?"

"The present of a lock of hair."

"Ah, yes. *Is she safe?*"

His voice dropped low, clandestine, wheedling.

"Yes, she is safe."



"Yes, I must be going."

"On board your ship?"

"Yes."

"I knew. I heard your cannon. You are a devil for cannon, my son. But I do not look perturbed, I think. A man like Yen How knows how to wait."

"Then, wait."

"I am waiting."

"It need not be for long, Yen."

"Poh! a day, or two."

"So soon?"

"Meanwhile, if you do not want me to strangle you, get off this soil."

"Yes—I must be going."

* * *

Another half-hour, and Hardy sprang suddenly upright, a lank dim figure in his ulster. It was not very far from morning, yet no sign of light.

"We shall meet again, then?" he said.

"To-morrow, perhaps," answered Yen How.

"Or to-day."

"So true. It is morning now. Say to-day, perhaps, then, boy."

"Well, to-day. . . ."

One walked hurriedly away; and the other, sitting there in the dark, smiled above his nose.

As for Hardy, he flung himself upon the cabin-cushions of the steamer as she turned her bows westward, and for four hours slept there, Ada Seward asleep, too, on the opposite side.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"TO-DAY."

SUDDENLY, a breath, a murmur, a thrill, a word of Life, ran like an electric wave through the length and breadth of Britain.

By wondrous marvel there were once more solid war-ships in Portsmouth port—ships friendly, belonging to England,

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One walked hurriedly away.

not made for England by English hands, come from nowhere! By wondrous marvel . . . . by the might of the Almighty God . . . by His unspeakable favour . . .

With this miracle was coupled by the people, without knowledge, by mere infallible intuition, the magic name of Hardy. . .

Early on the Thursday morning the wild rumour spread, incredible, yet believed. And at once the entire nation rushed into undoubting hope, gladly casting off its gloom, smitten with new and strange assurance of its high and world-wide Destiny.

And all the daily private business of life now, for the first time, utterly ceased; and men stood wondering to wait and watch the throes of Time, agape as though scribbled across the sky in characters of everlasting red they beheld the signature of God.

As for doubt, with rash faith they flung it quite away. In England—once more—were ships; and in England—once more—a Captain of ships.

At this thought a thrilling heat swept through the blood of every British being.

And there was a rumour abroad that, beside these marvellous battle-ships—nine, it was said, and more—there lay suddenly assembled that Thursday morning in the inner harbour of Portsmouth, a quite unaccountable crowd of *other* ships, Atlantic grey-hounds, Norddeutscher and Austrian Lloyds, Royal Naval Reserve Merchant Cruisers, prodigious four-masters, tenders, Scotch and Irish coast-guard vessels, unarmoured cruising ships, transports, colliers, trawlers, wooden merchant-men of every build, thronging the harbour!

A great unseen ferment and movement, a wide business of preparation, unknown to the general mass of the nation, must have been going forward for many days. But to what end the concentration of all these promiscuous crafts? Clearly, not a fighting end!

At eight Hardy stepped upon the Dover Cross Wall; and as if to show how with the awful and momentous is mingled the grotesque, and how "something infects the world," there, before him, on the quay, stood a bowing, long-haired figure.

Hardy recognised him at once, and a sound of vexed impatience started from his lips.

Edrapol tendered his card. Hardy did not take it. He said: "I know."

Edrapol was all bows. He said:

"I take this liberty, monsieur—sir. I find myself without a friend to make me a small service in this country. . . ."

"Well, now, is it possible?" said Hardy.

"You refer to——?"

"To your frivolity, monsieur."

Edrapol bowed.

"I am here in response to your letter, monsieur. Between gentlemen——"

"I have no *time*! Is it that you still wish to fight with me?"

"The question is explicit, monsieur—sir. Can you ask? Am I not here to make you a favour, since you were unable to present yourself with me? Such terms, between gentlemen——"

"But you know, do you not, that it is not legal to fight in that way in England?"

Such a smile smiled Edrapol! It was withering.

"Monsieur——!" he said reproachfully.

"Well, come now, I will fight you," said Hardy suddenly.

Out swept Edrapol's arms, and down curled his complying back.

"But not to-day, you understand."

"To-morrow—perhaps—the deluge!"

"I cannot help that, sir. You are, I take it, a great man for rules and ceremonies. Well, then, I keep you to your rules. It is not, I presume, a usual thing in your country to fight duels at a moment's notice? Well, then——"

"But, monsieur——"

"No. I have no time. I am going away to sea to-day. If I come back safe, we fight at the first moment, as I promised. Even if you choose to meet me at my landing-place, which will, I think, be Dover, we fight there. You will easily find me; and I will provide you with a second, and everything. If I return at all, I shall be here by to-morrow week—nine days. I think that is not beyond the usual interval which one takes to arrange preliminaries, so you cannot complain. I cannot stay longer. *Bonjour, monsieur.*"

Hardy walked away, while Edrapol shrugged, looking after him. With the girl Seward, Hardy proceeded to the Ship Hotel.

He at once wrote a letter to old Robert Mason, bidding him come for the girl, recommending her to his strict *surveillance*, and making certain monetary provisions for her future.

He then dispatched four telegrams, one to Portsmouth, announcing his coming; one to the Admiralty; a third to a Dr. Fletcher of Harley Street, in these words: "Send at once the things promised to me on board *Hirosaki*"; the fourth to one Henrik Björnson, a Norwegian, living in Parliament Street, Westminster, in these words: "Hope you will not fail to be with me by noon."

He himself made his way without delay by the South-Coast Railway to Brighton, and thence onward by the coast to Portsmouth, arriving there shortly before eleven.

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Looking abroad from the Hard, the Cumber, the quays of Portsea, the whole harbour seemed a mere endless tangle of masts and rigging.

By this time the four thousand gentlemen who formed Hardy's army of blue-jackets were distributed among the nine newly-arrived ships of war, the rank and file partly furnishing their own former officers, and being partly officered by the remnants of the regular service.

The entire still-living crew of the *Iphigenia*—the "Hundred and Eighty"—were borne in the *Hirosaki*, flag-ship.

We have not spoken of the doings of this gallant cohort subsequent to their departure from far Eastern waters.

They had found at Hong-Kong some coal-ships which they loaded, and brought forward in their wake. Again they had stopped at Singapore, and doubling the Cape, steamed by night, near by the African coast, through the Straits of Gibraltar; the garrison on the Rock, at a loss as to their identity, concluding that they must be Italian.

They were well provisioned in proportion to their number, and well coaled; so, passing south of Sardinia, they steered northward to M. Dumas' uninhabited island of Monte Christo (which is some twenty-five miles distant from the nearest land), prepared for a lengthy stay, there being two or three coves and bays affording very good anchorage.

The steam-pinnace of the *Iphigenia* carried a small quick-firing gun mounted on a pedestal for'ard; and Hardy, on leaving his men, gave instructions that any craft which might come near enough to sight the fleet, should be chased by the pinnace, and, if not captured, sunk. As a matter of fact, only three small Corsican craft were captured, and their crews retained at the island.

Hardy himself left them in the *Conrad*, and at Ile d'Elbe contrived to make terms with the *padrone* of the Maltese *speronare* in which he reached England.

The *Conrad* he left behind, in order, in the event of contingencies, to serve as a dispatch-boat.

Here, then, during some weeks, remained the Hundred and Eighty under the lazy Italian sky, shooting goats, and looking to their ships and guns. The Japanese whom they had with them they retained till the end of their stay at the island.

At last, with glad hurrahs, they saw the ship, flying the agreed flags, which came to recall them; and on the fifth morning they were at Portsmouth.

If it was true, as Hardy maintained, that it was men and not ships which fought a battle, the ships being only the tools of the men, then the *Hirosaki* was a great fighter. She was gallantly manned.

In addition to this, she was a wonderful tool; the largest effective-tonnaged ship that had ever been launched anywhere; the latest, and most exquisite product of the Thames Ironworks and Ship-building Company.

But with the fleet which we may call British collected at Portsmouth, the resources of Europe were not wholly exhausted. Among them, arrived during the night, were four ram-cruisers, a large corvette, two ram-monitors, and five torpedo gun-vessels from the Netherlands, the remainder of Holland's armament having been caught by the Japanese, or being with her East Indian Navy; there were also three small Norwegian torpedo-vessels; also, the first question asked by Hardy at Portsmouth was this: "No sign yet of the Spaniards?" There was none: the reason being that, as the entire home navy of Spain left her by America lay at anchor in Lisbon harbour, together with some Portuguese, they had been attacked, and for the most part annihilated, by a Japanese cruiser-squadron. Not one escaped without damage; yet as the Portsmouth force passed down Spithead, they were joined by a force of ten sail, mostly small, consisting of torpedo gun-vessels, all unarmoured.

Thus in this new Greater Armada, the Spaniard and the Englishman, in strange neighbourhood, fought side by side; this last answer of white Europe to yellow Asia being, as far as possible, unanimous.

There could be no doubt as to the day, or even the hour, of the final forward step of the yellow races. Already two hours after midnight of the previous night it was known in London that incalculable masses of men had put off from Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, St. Valéry, Tréport, Dieppe, all along that coast, borne mostly in flats with single paddle-wheel astern, in French-barge fashion—the most elementary form of steam motion—involving a journey of from eighteen to twenty hours to attain the nearest point of the English coast.

The front of this floating host must therefore be upon

With the girl Seward, Hardy proceeded to the Ship Hotel.

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The Hundred-and-Eighty remained.....shooting goats.

British soil at some almost calculable moment during the afternoon.

They were, as a matter of fact, retarded by an event which, though normal, came upon everyone with the effect of a surprise: the air, which for six days had seemed settled in a thick stagnation, at about ten in the morning—moved. A sensible breeze sprang up from the N.W., driving the sea-surface in sharply-lined hollows before it.

And at once there was a slight lightening of the dismal murk of the atmosphere.

Near noon a brief meeting of captains, summoned by Hardy, took place at Government House. He had little to say, except to point out that the battle upon which they were about to enter was with men of different, less nice, *morale* and training, than ordinary European sailors—clever apes—islanders, yet real foreigners on board a western ship-of-war. He tossed his hand, and added: "It is true they are flushed with a consciousness of power, gentlemen, and are greatly superior in metal and numbers. But that will not weigh too much with you."

He also said that when the more definite orders for battle went abroad on the impending of the contest, it was his will that his purposes should be clearly explained by captains and commanders to every person in the fighting fleet.

He also said that they would be wasting their energies uselessly in this battle, unless one man, whom he had reason to think would be with the fleet, were killed or captured; and he himself undertook to discover, without fail, in which ship that man was borne.

Immediately a move was made by captains toward ships in the port outside, and a few minutes after twelve the signal "weigh" went up.

At the same time a great bustle of preparation was taking place within the harbour itself. Dark smoke left particles of soot on flapping sails. A host of boats flitted to and fro. Never did Gosport, Portsea, Portsmouth, Southsea, and the forts around them, and the still harbour between them, hear so widespread a rumour of rattling chains and hurrying feet, and shouted God-speeds, and ordering voices.

Cumberland and South Sea Castle Forts hooted a volley of blessings and farewells as the war-ship fleet slipped down the flood tide. A few minutes later the ten Spaniards hove in sight.

The fleet was also augmented by the *Hero*, the *Nile*, the *Sfax*, the two gun-boats taken in the battle of the Channel, patched up now, and three French composite gun-vessels captured during a Mediterranean battle.

They made up a respectable fighting-power: the nine ships being considerably the most powerful of the Japanese navy, and the *Hirosaki* the most powerful of ships.

Yet it was only the audacity of Hardy that would, with any sort of hope, have led this force against, we will not say the weight, but the numbers, opposed to him; and the havoc which overtook his comparatively little fleet in the battle that followed would certainly, had his judgment been absolutely cool, have been foreknown to him—or perhaps was foreknown.

Since the year 1892 Japan had placed orders with various firms all over the world for a hundred and seventeen new ships, making an aggregate of some hundred and fifteen thousand tons, half to be completed by 1902, and half by 1906. At the period of this new programme, she already possessed a very respectable navy; and at about the time of the outbreak of the European war, nearly one half of the new ships were already in her hands.

Hardy therefore opposed a fleet of forty-three ships all told (only eleven of them being ships of a high class) to a fleet of one hundred and thirty-nine sail, including the Chinese vessels, mostly of extreme modernity, and high fighting power.

His main dependence at this time seems, as he said, to have been upon the comparative *morale* of the two crews. He commanded a fleet composed, except for the Continentals, wholly of British gentlemen; the other crews were imitators, acquainted with tactics recommended in books, incapable, he conceived, of originating, incapable of combatting originality. He guessed, too, that small as was his force, he happened to have a superiority in one weapon—not in general a very reliable one—the Torpedo.

Perhaps trusting to one or both of these things, he contrived to give the impression (though it is questionable if he were as sincere as he usually was) that, on starting from port, he was without any suspicion that he might now fail to account for Asia as he had accounted for Europe.

The breeze freshened, but the air, though lightened, continued murky; there was some difficulty in deciphering signals; and to facilitate messages by trumpet-call, the ships moved onward in close formation, the Dutch to the extreme starboard, the Spaniards to port.

Ten miles astern spread far the great mass of other craft.

Alone sat Hardy in the *Hirosaki*'s conning-tower, which stood on the after-part of the forecastle-deck, very strongly armoured, and communicating by an armoured tube right down to the armoured deck, and the bowels of the ship.

In that hour so great a travail came upon this poor, troubled soul, that he could hardly bear to live. Here was the Gethsemane of the young man. All the Care of earth burdened upon him; all the floods and the waters of Destiny passed over him. He groaned; the forehead that rested upon his hand sweated great drops. A year ago he had thought himself a simple Hampshire sailor-lad—and see, now, with the cracking thews of Atlas he

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must uphold the world! "Oh, if it be possible—if it be possible—" This old cry of passionate agony rived through all his being. That he alone should bear the whole, he,—one frail back,—that *he* should be the ordained to shriek in solitary travail with the birth-pangs of the new Future that was to be, and be rent to shreds and atoms in the eruption of his monstrous offspring, this was piteous. To be a Saviour, it seems, is no light matter: the Redeemer from Hell must himself traverse the flames. At all events, the brain upon which what we call civilisation now depended was near to frenzy. That his toiling back could bear the horrid mass at all proved the dazzling speed and vigour of the boy—but he writhed. The weight was stress; his sinews creaked. Also, in that hour of his agony his shattered nerves represented to him the world which he upheld as a world black, draped in crape. "Oh, if it be only possible . . . ."; again and again, in groan on groan, he uttered his agony of spirit, longing only to die, to die. And even as he longed, he sprang up briskly, and he cried:

"Twelve knots!"

A little S.W. of Beachy Head the fleet was joined by the fast private yacht of a gentleman who was acting as scout. He went on board the *Hirosaki*, and was conducted to John Hardy.

The Japanese fleet, he said, were on the way between the Somme-mouth and the Sussex coast, but were much spread out, not apparently expecting serious opposition, and steaming at the rate of perhaps four or five knots. A vast breadth of channel was parterred for league on league with masses of barge-like crafts, which, if one might conjecture, were concentrating toward the narrow part of the Strait. Their progress was very slow; but some were by now certainly not more than nine or ten miles from the Kent coast. The gentleman had passed so near to one mass as to see through his glass a distribution of some sort of green pottage in one barge, and what looked like a fight between two Chinamen in another. He had not been fired at. The boats were incredibly over-crowded. He had heard, he said with a smile, that about 70,000 men were massed upon Hastings, and that forty Maxims were in position on the sea-front.

Shortly before four a scout of the enemy directed from beyond effective range the rays of two electric searchlights upon the British, and at once hasted back to eastward.

By half past, the British made out a great bank of cloud to eastward. The breeze had now freshened to a moderately stiff gale from the north-west. For the first time for a week, hurrying dark clouds above were visible athwart a gloom of twilight. The sea was curling into fore-running hollows before the British stems, like backing pages, who, with bows and graces, usher in the visitor.

John Hardy's brain, and heart, and life was in his eyes. He glared through his glass like a famished wolf.

The bank of smoke quickly cleared; he could discern forms of ships—eight miles from him, in line abreast—and moving, it was clear, rapidly. Legion was their name. His eyes started, and stared; he muttered with his lips.

He gazed for two minutes, crazily, hundred-eyed; then he started, and hissed a swift, "By Heaven!" Then he flew to the tube.

To be signalled to the fleet:

"Keep speed and formation. Use no torpedoes in combat."

To his own engine-room:

"*Full speed ahead!*"

The engines of the *Hirosaki* instantly quickened their throb and complex turmoil. She forged forward. Her best speed was nearly nineteen knots. She was like an ugly, stout island in a hurry.

The wondering question went pervading his fleet—was he about to fight the entire navy of Japan *alone?* Was he not rushing like the demented whom the gods destroy into the very mouth of Hades?

(To be concluded.)

Will be Published

ON FRIDAY, THE FIRST OF JULY.

PART I. OF

The Pilgrim's Progress.

BY JOHN BUNYAN.

With an Introduction by the Rev. H. R. HAWEIS.

Embellished with over one hundred and twenty designs, done by three brothers—

GEORGE WOOLLISCROFT RHEAD,
FREDERICK RHEAD, LOUIS RHEAD,

who for three years have been engaged in illustrating this favourite classic. The drawings themselves have recently been on exhibition in London, Paris, and New York, and are unique. Speaking of them

The *Athenæum* says: "These excellent examples of the right way of illustrating Bunyan possess those masculine qualities, that directness, and the robust energy that the themes demand. As to the higher elements we associate under the name of design, there is not the slightest doubt Bunyan, could he go to Bond Street and study the works of the Messrs. Rhead, would recognise in them a crowning mercy, specially reserved till now for himself."

The *Daily News* says: "At first glance these drawings, which are done in pen and ink, with occasional aid of the brush, appear to accord in strong family resemblance, but in reality the three brothers differ considerably. They have worked, of course, on the same lines to some extent, evolving a curiously archaic representation of the principal personages as they suppose them to have existed in the imagination of John Bunyan. . . . Mr. G. Woolliscroft Rhead has chosen the more weird and dramatic scenes in the journey, such as Christian entering the Valley of Death, and the men among the tombs and congregation of the Dead, the Land of Beulah, a by-way to Hell, the appearance of Apollyon and the escape from Doubting Castle, these and many other episodes being conceived with considerable invention and imagination, with realism and symbolism blended profusely. Mr. Frederick Rhead has aimed rather at facial expressions of character in detail, contrasting the greater virtues and vices as well as the lesser comedy of manners appertaining to humanity in an emphatic way that approaches grotesqueness in several instances. The incident of Pliable's return home to a boisterous welcome, the vivacity of the group where Talkative is at the ale-bench, the crowded assembly of Vanity Fair, and similar episodes, are done with skill and a bold touch."

The *Daily Mail* says: "Messrs. C. Arthur Pearson Limited, are about to publish a new edition of Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and to three brothers—Mr. George Woolliscroft Rhead, Mr. Frederick A. Rhead, and Mr. Louis Rhead—has been intrusted the task of doing the drawings. Most of these are fine, virile pieces of work; all of them are full of imagination and reverent feeling. It is interesting to notice that, although the methods of the brothers are closely akin, there is just sufficient temperamental difference in the work of each to suggest individuality."

This Work will be Issued in Twelve Monthly Parts, with Coloured Wrapper price 6d. each part.

Also an Edition de Luxe of this Work will be issued, limited to 200 Copies for England and America, numbered and signed by the Artists, printed on hand-made paper, and bound in buckram.

IMPORTANT TO CYCLISTS.

We still have left a few of the Cycling Road Maps issued last year with the *Athletic Record*, for Essex, Devonshire, Kent, Sussex, Herts, and Derbyshire. We will send these six, until the stock is exhausted, to any reader who sends us three penny stamps and a self-directed wrapper with a halfpenny stamp affixed.

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THE ILLEGIBLE SIGNATURE.

It was about fifteen days ago, at the country home of Brignac, on one of those exquisite afternoons when, although one shivers at the thought of the approaching autumn, the sun throws here and there mild though already paler rays.

While awaiting the hour for taking up the nets in the pretty bend of the Marne, a river which loiters indolently along the meadows, winding like a great silver snake, we are talking on the wide verandah which was filled with the heavy, intoxicating odour of heliotropes.

A charming man is Brignac. Formerly an officer in the light cavalry, he is a man of majestic chest, large face, a trifle too flushed, with an immense white beard and square features. Born at that period when the empire was at its height, he had taken pleasure as it came to him, and it must be said that the advent of the Republic seemed to him an insufficient reason for renouncing the pleasures of this world. He amused himself under M. Thiers, under MacMahon, and even under M. Grevy. Brignac was then—but why disclose the age of a gallant man whose friendship is true and whose cook is without equal? He was advised to try the baths.

It was there, near a spring, whence bubbled up a hot liquid which smelt like a bad egg, that he met a young English girl, straight and slender as a pretty bamboo stalk. He had still a gallant air and quite a fortune, she very little. The next winter the pretty English woman married the former cavalry officer. They have one child—they are happy.

Only Brignac has aged a great deal, and has become horribly serious. He is a good comrade for me. He gave me, when I was very young, that practical advice which is never forgotten, and I am happy from time to time to be with him—for an hour or two.

While talking, as we passed by a little room opening on the conservatory, I saw in the corner of the room, soberly seated before a table, my host's son, Gaston, a pretty, dark child. He had let his pen roll across the table, and with a glance that seemed to me full of melancholy, he followed the rustling flight of the swallows that were skimming close to the lawn, flying through the swarm of gnats.

On such a beautiful day, in this room which, in contrast to the sunny verandah, seemed more gloomy than a dungeon in the Palace of the Doges, the sight of this child-prisoner gave me pain, and I could not refrain from saying to my friend:

"How have you the heart to shut up this child at such a time?"

And Brignac answered:

"My dear friend, when he knows how to write I will leave him alone, for he is not yet five years old and very intelligent; but he must learn to write, and write well, I mean."

"That is, without doubt, because your own handwriting is like cat-scratches."

"That might be a reason. We should endeavour to help our children to avoid such of our faults as have troubled us in our own career, and besides——"

"My dear Brignac, I do not know whether it is because you live too much in the country, but it seems to me that you are becoming very much of a Prudhomme."

He interrupted me with some spirit:

"Perhaps I am like Prudhomme. Prudhomme was an individual who paddled his own canoe very well; besides, do you wish me to tell you why I am anxious that my little scamp should write well?"

"It is a story of that time when you would not have called me Prudhomme. It was a long time ago—'63. At that time Baden-Baden was Baden-Baden, and Monte Carlo nothing but a little fishing village. Everyone who was in the swim, or considered himself so, hurried to Baden-Baden as soon as July came round. At that time the club-rooms were empty—not more so than now during the week of the races at Deauville. That year I had remained at Paris, where in my little suite on a ground floor in the Rue Taitbout, I had not been so frightfully dull, when one morning a letter was brought to me. The letter was a demand for money—not one of those vulgar, begging letters, heaping upon one recitals of ill-luck, swearing eternal gratitude and everlasting devotion. No; it was short and to the point, without any beating about the bush.

"'I have not a single sou. Send me immediately a thousand francs that I may pay my hotel bill and return to France to enlist.'

"This letter, horribly scrawled, was dated from Baden-Baden. As to the signature, it was impossible to read it.

"I made every attempt, examining it letter by letter; searching among my papers for the name of the person

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who could have been guilty of this vile scrawl. It was absolutely impossible to discover any clue which would put me on the right track. At Baden-Baden? I had three hundred friends at Baden-Baden. But this unlucky name—still, I must find out what it was. For two days I did nothing but turn it over in my mind, seeking the solution, giving everyone whom I met this signature to decipher. Absolutely useless. Each person gave a different opinion.

"You can imagine into what a fever this had thrown me. At the time I was full of a great many notions. I imagined that to refuse money to a friend was meanness. We are all simpletons when young. But what caused me the greatest annoyance was the thought that perhaps this note was from someone for whom I entertained a real friendship.

"I telegraphed to ten or twelve intimate friends—none was the author of the note. Then I betook myself to experts in chirography. One said the name was Casernier—had no doubt of it; was willing to swear it. The second said that he challenged anyone to read the name otherwise than Sutinais, and was willing to swear to that name; and, finally, a third declared it was not a name at all, but a word. In his opinion it was 'Cicilities.'

"Sutinais and Casernier were alike unknown to me. I turned over the club directories, I again reviewed my book of addresses, name by name. Nothing! I could discover nothing. I was almost crazy, you may imagine, and I had even lost sight, to some extent, of the original reason for all this trouble, thinking less now of obliging a friend than of discovering this name so carefully concealed.

"On the third day an inspiration came to me, so simple that it had occured to me only after all the other attempts had failed. I wrote to Baden-Baden for a list of the Frenchmen staying at the hotel of the unfortunate scribbler. I would need only to write to all whom I knew in the place. This calmed me. And, in truth, I needed it, for I had conceived an inexplicable rage against all this, as if something mysterious and fatal pursued me.

"I returned early on the evening of the third day, and soon fell asleep.

"I ought to tell you that I then had—I still have, in fact—the habit of using a night lamp. I cannot bear to feel myself in total darkness for an instant.

"That night—it is truly a singular thing, and I have never been able to think of it without a strange sensation—that night I was awakened by a sharp cracking sound in the great silence. I have never known what that noise was—doubtless the night lamp going out, for it was perfectly dark. At first a feeling of awful anguish oppressed me, a feeling I always have when in the dark, and before I had had time to fully awaken, I heard—yes, my friend, I actually heard—the effect of nervousness, you say? It matters not; I heard a voice, which whispered very low: 'Jacques Lerminier.'

"A cold shiver ran through my whole body, though I saw no reason for it. In a second I had risen, lighted a candle, and re-read the letter from Baden-Baden. Why had I not deciphered it before? It was perfectly plain.

"Lerminier was a refined boy, obliging, but a little wild, whom I had loved much when we were young together; soon lost from sight, then found again in those momentary encounters where a rapid clasp of the hand and an earnest: 'Do you remember?' is all, and then separation, perhaps for years.

"Poor Jacques! That is what we always called him at the school of Saint Cyr.

"He should certainly have had his thousand francs.

"I looked at the clock. It was past midnight. Nothing could be done until morning. Immediately I wrote a letter to Baden-Baden, excusing myself and explaining all. I placed the money in it and sealed it. And while I did this, I remembered that the whisper which I had heard erewhile, was exactly like the voice of Jacques when deeply moved.

"How strange is the work of memory in our brains, I said to myself, and how was it possible for me to recall at the same time and while yet asleep the name and the voice of 'Poor Jacques.'

"Then I went back to bed again, satisfied and calm. I did not dream any more of the whispering voice in the blackness of my silent chamber. No, indeed; I thought no more of it, until two days later, when I received a dispatch from Baden-Baden, My registered letter had been remailed to me.

"'Poor Jacques' had killed himself at midnight two days before—at the moment when my sleep was interrupted by a sharp crack—the sharp crack like the report of a pistol."

Brignac coughed silently to clear his throat.

"I positively insist that my child shall write a legible hand," he said with a sad smile.

J. Ricard.

Spell It. M. A. P. Spell It.

EVERYBODY has heard of Mr. T. P. O'Connor. Many people know him as an Irishman, many as an M.P., and many again as the most brilliant journalist living. He founded *The Star*, he established *The Sun*, and by them made possible the halfpenny daily paper as exemplified in *The Daily Mail*, *The Leader*, *The Morning*, and others in the Provinces.

It will be remembered that in the early days of T.P.'s journalistic career, when he started *The Star* the most noticeable feature in that then most noticeable paper was the column headed "Mainly About People." Before that time no journalist had been bold enough to exploit the personal par and tell us what famous people were doing in their leisure hours, in their houses, and the hundred and one things we now hear about them. It was in that column, too, that T.P. proved that, brilliant as he was as a literary critic, slashing as a political leader-writer, he was at his best in drawing a pen portrait of a man or a woman; in describing the one or the other, from the innermost beats of their hearts to the cut of the coat or the colour of the frock.

This feature in modern journalism was, as I say, initiated by Mr. O'Connor, and he now intends to enlarge upon it by editing a paper to be called "M.A.P.," which means "Mainly About People." It will be published from the Offices of *Pearson's Weekly*, every Thursday, at the price of One Penny.

ASK FOR THE FIRST NUMBER OF

M. A. P.

∴ ON THURSDAY, JUNE 16th. ∴

THE KISS OF DEATH.

Off the West African coast, in latitude three degrees south and longitude thirty east, lies the picturesque island of Anno Bom. Surrounded by the blue waves, girdled about by foam, rich in tropical verdure, it is like a gem of the ocean.

It is peopled by the descendants of Africans who were in captivity, and who, according to the romantic legend told by the present islanders, had a wonderful escape from a slave-ship, and were cast upon this land of refuge and freedom.

The legend, which serves in lieu of history for the people, includes the narrative of a heroic young African girl, who, inspired by love of her people, pure in heart, bold in resolve, and gifted with such talent for dissimulation and stratagem as might have belonged to the woman who overcame Samson, laid down her life for her kindred, and her final act was to liberate them while her blood was chilling with an insidious poison.

The story is given in the words of the King, as he narrated it to me.

"Listen, now, my guest and my children, to what Umzula's father spoke to his son, and my father repeated to me.

"The tribe of Kalamba dwelt, from the beginning of the world, in peace and freedom in their valley under the shadow of Kilimanjaro, until one dark night, when the tribe were all sleeping. Then, when no danger was feared, a host of Arab slave-traders fell on our village, and all that they killed not in our battle with them they made captives.

"Wooden yolks were placed about their necks, and they were driven with whips and sharp-pointed sticks—men, women, and children—for many moons, across deserts and mountains, and through terrible forests and rushing rivers—even the women, with little children tied on their backs.

"Many died of hunger and thirst. Many were devoured by wild beasts. Some were killed by serpents. Others were stolen by other slave men.

"At last, at about the second hour of night, they reached a great water. Next day, from a great ship that lay near the shore, there came many white men that were armed with swords and spears and guns.

"These white men had much cloth and beads, money and chains. They also had bracelets and anklets of heavy iron, which, after much speaking with the Arabs, they fastened upon the hands and feet of our people. The Arabs returned, rejoicing at all that the white men had given them for the tribe of Kalamba.

"The white men then drove us into their boats. We had no tears left and could only groan. The white men laughed and forced us down into the inside of their ship. We only knew that it was day when the streaks of the pitying sunlight came in through our prison door.

"One time our hearts leapt within us when the waters dashed over the ship, for we thought that our God was opening the great waters to swallow us up and give us freedom in death.

"A strange fever began to rage in us as the groans and wailings of our wives and little ones sank like fire into our ears and hearts, and made us writhe and hiss like snakes. In our despair we were planning to beat each other to death with the iron rings in our hands, the women asking us piteously to kill them and their little ones first. But the white men opened our prison door, drove us up, and fastened us with iron rings to the deck.

"Once more we saw the sun rising, and beside us we saw a great white cloud that seemed to stand on the water like the white head of Kilimanjaro over the plain of Kalamba. We were turning away, thinking it a cruel dream, when suddenly the cloud opened, and there stood before us a beautiful green mountain, fresh as the valley of Kalamba in the spring time, with silvery streaks of water rushing down its sides.

"Frantically we struggled, but the white man's chains held us, and his cruel laugh mocked us as we sat and looked at the beautiful land.

"That night Umzula, the eldest of our young women, and the betrothed of Nalunga, once the pride and flower of our tribe, but now the slave of the slave man, crept stealthily from where the slave men were playing with cards, to where her mother sat with her other children.

"She looked alternately at the darkening island and the faces and fetters of her father and mother, while her eyes glowed as if some terrible resolve had begun to burn in her brain. She spoke to her mother in a firm and determined tone, that reached every ear and made every slave chain rattle.

"'Oh, mother,' she said, 'although the slave men value every slave, even the babies at the breast, as rocks of gold, nevertheless are the slave men as children before the love dance. Only teach me the secret of the kiss of death. Teach me this, and to-morrow the tribe of Kalamba will dance and sing in great joy and freedom in the beautiful land that God has sent in the white cloud.'

"Umzula's mother looked from her daughter to the chains of her husband, the once proud chief of the Kalambans, and upon Nalunga, sitting, like his chief, with his brow resting upon his shackled hands, then upon the remainder of the once happy tribe, and then towards the mountain.

"Embracing her daughter, and having spoken into her ear secrets well known only to the wives and daughters of great chiefs, she gave her daughter two small vessels containing a liquid. Umzula glided away to answer the slave man's call.

"Umzula danced the love dance, and the white men, with poisoned kisses on their lips, fell one after another, sinking into death. Then Umzula, her eyes gleaming, lips swollen, and gasping for breath, staggered to her mother's feet and unlocked her mother's fetters.

"'Oh, my daughter," cried the mother, 'why did you not drink of the liquid in the larger vessel to save yourself?'

"'Only enough to save my life long enough to save you. Tell Nalunga that Umzula, defiled by the kiss of the white man, dies with her last thought of him.'

"She fell dead while the chains rattled about her, and the sound of the cry of freedom rang in her failing ears. The slavers were all dead.

"The next day the ship was dashed against the rocks of this island. Over the grave of Umzula is a cross made of all that is left of the slave ship."

Herbert Potter.

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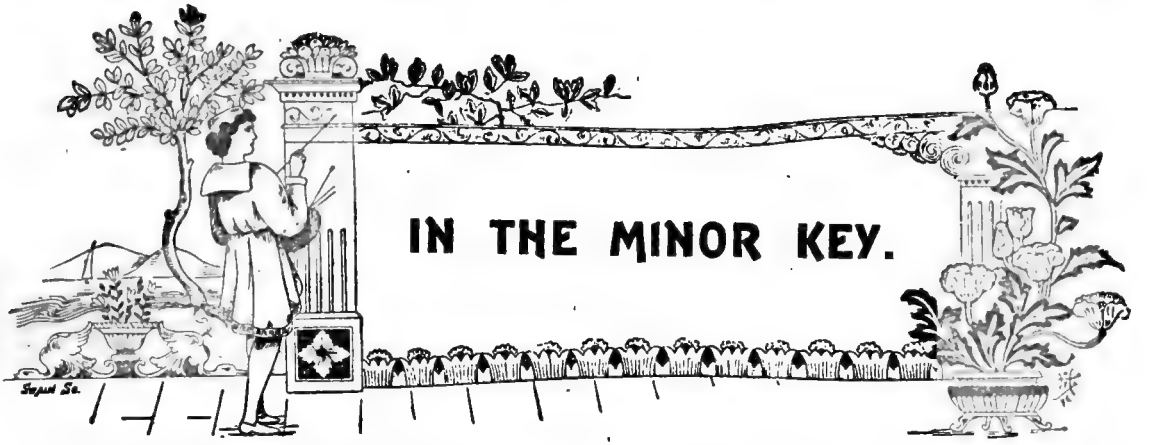

IN THE MINOR KEY.

"Vaulting ambition which o'er leaps itself, and falls."

"It is useless trying again, Mrs. Sefton, it is as I feared, your voice has utterly gone."

"Don't say that! Let me try again, perhaps I am a little tired to-day, perhaps——" But the sentence ended in a dreary little sob.

Professor Meredith rubbed his spectacles assiduously. He did not venture to speak or look at the little woman standing before him; but a sad shake of the head spoke more forcibly than any words.

"Then everything is over, all my years of study, all my hopes for the future, everything is in vain! Is that what you mean?"

Mrs. Sefton's voice sounded shrill and hysterical. Professor Meredith hurriedly rolled up a piece of music, and put out his hand.

"It is a shock and disappointment, I know, and no one feels it more keenly than your old master, who had hoped to——"

He checked himself abruptly.

"Good-bye, good-bye," he said nervously, taking the limp hand of his favourite pupil, and not trusting himself to further speech, he hurried from the room and out of the house.

As the front door banged, Mrs. Sefton started, and looked round her little room. The light of a dull winter's afternoon was fading slowly away, and the blazing fire light illuminated the walls and furniture. It was warm and cosy, but its occupant shivered as if with cold. From somewhere upstairs came the sound of a baby's laugh.

Hilda Sefton frowned as if the sound annoyed her, and she commenced to pace up and down the room with quick, agitated steps. A clock on the mantel-piece chimed the hour; she heeded it not, although its silver tone should have heralded her husband's footsteps.

"A telegram, m'm," said a servant opening the door suddenly.

Mrs. Sefton read it mechanically.

"Shall be late to-night, important business.—Dick."

"There is no answer."

Then, as the door closed, she flung herself into a chair, exclaiming:

"Thank God, I could not bear him near me yet."

For a few minutes the tears stole silently down her cheeks, then she spoke aloud to the now dying fire.

"So this is the end of all my hopes, for this have I studied and worked from morning till night, for this I have denied myself all pleasures and amusements, so that I might study, and my voice grow stronger and more beautiful. All gone, my voice which was to charm thousands. Better I had lost everything than that. Oh, God, why did I marry him? . . . What am I thinking? . . . . I feel as if I must hate him—and baby, too."

Hilda Sefton gave a bitter cry and slipped on to the rug, where she lay with her face buried.

"Oh, for a miracle," she sobbed. "A miracle, dear God—give me back my voice—take everything but that."

The days of long ago came back with painful memories—the days when she had been free, when she had studied and hoped, growing unknowingly full of a boundless ambition—the days before Dick had wooed and won her, and the days before her child was born, the child who had cost her so much pain and suffering, who had laid her on a bed of sickness for months, and had now taken from her her voice. For weeks she had hoped against hope as the days crept by and brought renewed strength.

"It will come back," she had whispered to reassure her sinking heart, and now she knew, alas! it would never come back again, and she must go through life with a heart well-nigh bursting with ambition which could never be satisfied.

"Oh, for a miracle, a miracle—anything but that!" she moaned.

In the darkness there was the slightest rustle of a woman's gown, and a faint perfume filled the room. Then there was a low sigh.

"Give me back my voice!" wailed the prostrate figure on the hearthrug.

"Child, do you know what you are asking?" said a quiet, strangely musical voice.

Hilda Sefton sat up and peered through the gloom.

"Yes," she said fiercely. "Yes."

Her head throbbed and burnt and she felt a difficulty in breathing; she could not even think clearly.

"And you would give up *everything?*" the voice went on with a stress on the last word.

Hilda put her hand to her head. She did not wonder who had entered under cover of the firelight; all such mundane matters had gone in her one absorbing grief.

"Everything," she answered, "for my beautiful voice to come back with its old power."

"Your child?" asked the voice very softly.

"My child, my baby, how can I look at her again? She has stolen my voice from me."

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"Your husband's love?" the voice was lower still.

"He can never take the place of my lost voice," cried Hilda bitterly.

Then there was silence, save for the cracking of the dying embers in the grate.

"And if your voice should be restored to you, would it atone for an empty, loveless life? Answer not hurriedly," implored the strange speaker.

"If it could be restored to me I would regret nothing," answered Hilda, with sudden firmness. "Nothing. But who are you to talk thus? What power have you to give or take?"

"None," answered the voice sadly; "none, save where the human heart is lost to all except ambition."

"I do not understand," stammered Hilda.

"When a human soul cries out to God even as I did, rejects all love and mercy even as I did, then it is my punishment to give even as I was given.

"Hilda Sefton, your voice shall be restored to you, but unseen, unheard, it will be my portion to journey through your loveless life by your side."

In the growing darkness for one second, Hilda perceived a face. A woman's face, sad with unutterable sadness, a face of beauty marred by the look of pain and weariness in the dark eyes, which were gazing at her with a strange tender pity which seemed to chill and awe her with dim forebodings.

There was a rustling sound again, and the faint perfume in the room died away, as with a wild scream Hilda fell insensible. The scream was echoed from the room above, then there was a deep, ominous silence. When Richard Sefton returned from his office it was late and he was tired. He noticed with surprise that there were no lights in their cosy little drawing room, and it was with a sense of coming evil that he let himself in with his key. No little wife came to greet him as he entered. He stood in the hall listening. From upstairs came the sound of a man's voice, an echo of stifled sobs, and at length someone appeared and descended the stairs.

It was with a certain knowledge of disaster that Dick greeted the doctor.

"What is the matter. My wife—?" he stopped, for the gravity of the doctor's face made him afraid to frame his question.

"It is your little girl—the nurse let her fall off the table, she struck her head against the fender. Hold up, man, hold up, for your wife's sake."

Dick Sefton broke from the doctor's detaining hand and sprung upstairs. Outside the nursery door the nurse was crouched, sobbing loudly. Inside, on her tiny bed, lay Dick's little eighteen-months-old daughter, dead, while his wife, with wide open, staring eyes, was rocking to and fro in a chair, singing softly to herself an air from some opera.

* * * * *

A year passed away, and it was the night of Hilda Sefton's *début* in the musical world.

The night of her triumph, the reward for which she had worked and longed! As she looked at the sea of upturned faces in the hall she enjoyed the feeling of her coming victory. No dread or fear of failure oppressed her as she stood there with smiling lips. Her voice had returned with added richness and purity, and she was fully conscious of its beauty and worth.

In the plaudits of the people would come the balm for all her sufferings, all her pain and loss. And Dick, too——

Her eye ran along the front row. Dick 's seat was vacant.

So he had not come to hear her sing, he had not cared enough for that; well! no matter, she wanted not his praise. But nevertheless she sighed.

And Dick Sefton meanwhile?

He had been detained late in the city and had rushed home to find an empty house. His wife had left early for a final practice with her master. He hurried through his lonely dinner; it was not the first by very many he had eaten alone during the past year. Hilda was often away singing, or studying, or resting, and must not be disturbed, and by degrees he had come to look upon these lonely meals as the usual thing. His meal finished, he went upstairs to dress. The room was littered with his wife's things, and he hunted for his dress clothes, turning various articles on to the floor in his unsuccessful search for a clean white tie.

"There is a lady downstairs wishes to speak to you at once. She is a nurse, I think," said the servant, meeting him as he was about to descend the stairs.

In the drawing-room stood a little figure in grey nursing garb, with soft fluffy brown hair escaping from her bonnet and falling round her face.

"Why Maysie, Maysie dear!" cried Dick, his face lighting up with pleasure (he did not know how much it expressed) as he seized the hands of his cousin and one time playfellow and sweetheart, "what lucky chance brings you here?"

The girl looked up at her old playfellow wistfully. She noticed how tired and worn he looked, how he had aged since she had seen him last, and how something was missing from his face—its old brightness and life.

"Your mother is very ill, Dick," she said gently. "I am going down to her to-night. Will you come with me?"

In less than ten minutes Dick Sefton and his cousin were hurrying to the station.

It was indeed a night of triumph.

As Hilda Sefton drove home, the ringing plaudits of the people still sounded in her ears, and the hearty congratulations, poured upon her on all sides, were such as even satisfied her boundless desires. But, as she entered her home, a sense of disappointment fell upon her. Something was missing. After all, had her success given her the pleasure she had anticipated? As she went upstairs she paused at the door of a room, which was seldom opened now, and went in. The light from a lamp-post outside illuminated the room faintly. Hilda stood still and gazed at the tiny bed.

Suddenly the sense of a faint perfume roused her from her reverie, and, looking up, she thought she saw a face, a woman's face looking at her with sad eyes of loving pity. And then she knew that she had worked in vain, that she would have sacrificed all the triumphs of the night for the sound of a baby's laugh.

* * * * * *

The greatest singer of the day, the idol of the people, sat in the splendid drawing-room of her London flat.

"You are surely not going to sing *this* to-night?" asked Professor Meredith, picking up a song which lay on the table.

"Why not?" asked the singer indifferently.

Her old master looked at her critically.

"Because if you do, you will fail," he said slowly.

Mrs. Sefton merely raised her eyebrows.

"I am going to tell you candidly what, fortunately for you, the world has not discovered yet. There is not one atom of pathos or human sympathy in your voice. As long as you confine yourself to brilliant music, or to anything, in fact, but these simple old ballads, whose

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only merit is their pathos, you will succeed. To sing this would be fatal."

"I am going to sing it!" replied Hilda Sefton obstinately.

"Then I prophesy failure!" retorted the Professor; and, rising, he abruptly took his leave.

When he had gone Hilda Sefton took the song and read it through. It was simple and quaint, breathing of love and tenderness from beginning to end. She laid it down with a sigh, and rang for her carriage. Wrapped in her rich furs she descended to the street.

"To the Park, m'm?" said her coachman, expecting the usual reply.

"No, James, drive to——" and Hilda named an obscure street in an unfashionable neighbourhood.

"Put me down at the corner and wait," commanded his mistress to the man's utter mystification.

With slow steps Hilda walked down the quiet road. When she came opposite a certain house she paused. It had been the home to which she had gone as Dick Sefton's bride. She glanced at an upper window. A little girl with golden curls was looking out.

"My baby's nursery," muttered Hilda, looking at the child with longing eyes. The little girl was about the age her little one would have been had it lived—four years old. With a sigh she retraced her steps.

It seemed such ages ago since she had lived there, unknown, obscure, and happy.

What was her splendid home compared to that, and Dick!

She counted on her fingers the weeks which had passed since she had seen her husband last. They did not often meet now. He was away all day, and she was absent at night, absorbed in her work and public life. So they had separated, and Dick spent his evenings in the country now. His mother's death had left him with a country house, and Maysie's mother lived there and kept a welcome for him.

Maysie Breton! Hilda's foot beat an angry tatoo on the floor of the carriage at the thought of the girl whom she had been jealous of in the far away days before they were married. Now he was always with her. What did it matter? she cared not for him—she lived solely for her Art's sake.

But a face arose by her side, and she knew that she lied—that she loved Dick as she had never loved him before—loved him only too late now that she had lost him.

For his heart, yearning for love and comfort, had turned to the playmate of his childhood, and now his wife was nothing to him. If she went out of his life to-morrow he would not miss her, only welcome his release.

His release, yes, that was it. Who *would* miss her if she died? She could not count a single friend. For the moment she was the idol of the people, and yet so great was her loneliness there was no one to whom she could pour out the bitterness of her heart.

"No one? Yes, one." The sad face which was ever by her side, which haunted her night and day, which looked at her with those reproachful eyes in the moments of her greatest triumphs, and in the long silence of the night-time.

Hilda dimly wondered if she too, in some future life, would be doomed to haunt some victim like herself.

Fame, riches, honours and glory, what were they but empty-sounding names? To dust and ashes they had turned in her grasp, and for these she had bartered the sweet love of husband and of child. In her own room the full misery of it all fell upon her. There was no retracing her steps. Nothing could bring her baby back to life, nothing could wake again her husband's love.

"Oh, Heaven, be merciful, be merciful," she moaned, "and give me release," and the sound of the spoken words woke the echoes of another prayer of long ago. "A miracle, a miracle, give me back my voice!"

When the great singer appeared that night some few noticed that her face matched in whiteness the magnificent bouquet of roses which she carried.

One man even saw a strange tremor pass over the usually cold proud face. He did not know the reason.

Far back in a gallery Hilda had seen her husband with a grey robed figure by his side. As they scanned the programme their heads were close together, and once Hilda saw Dick's hand steal out to seek for that of his companion. She understood its motive. The words of the song she was to sing would appeal thus to lovers, and Dick was drawing Maysie's attention to it.

Then she smiled a sad smile, a smile which had puzzled her old master already once to-night. She had met him as she entered the hall.

"So you have come to hear me fail?" she said kindly. "I am glad, for to-night will be my greatest and my final triumph," and she had left him with the same strange smile with which she now faced her audience.

For years after, many people, besides Professor Meredith, could not hear the words of that song without tears coming into their eyes. Those who heard the famous singer never forgot that night.

It seemed as if all the pathos, all the love and sweetness in the world were gathered into her voice, and the silence at its close was more eloquent than a thunder of applause. When the audience had recovered and clamoured for her re-appearance, it was announced that the singer had been taken suddenly ill, and could not re-appear.

But behind, in the darkened artists' room, lay Hilda Sefton—dead.

Had God in His mercy given her release?

MARY WEST.

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"Home Notes" Summer Double Number,

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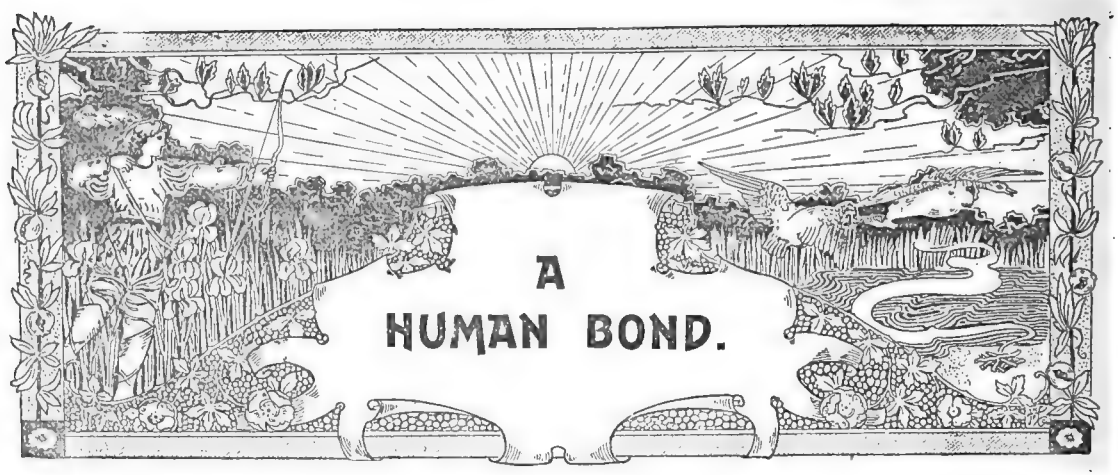

A HUMAN BOND.

I.

"Would that I could pass the examination of your heart. How I would cram for it!"

"Hush!"

Sir Lionel and Lady Charteris, of Linden Gardens, were giving a private dinner party to celebrate the promotion of their son, Jack Charteris, to a captaincy in the Guards. There were, perhaps, not more than a dozen or so of their friends invited; but young Doctor Charles Keppell, a tall, well-built young fellow, dark, with clean-shaven face, was amongst the number. He was an accomplished vocalist, and on this occasion used his splendid and well-trained tenor voice oftener perhaps than was his usual wont.

But he sang to Alice Charteris, who accompanied him on the piano. He was deeply in love with her, and in a certain measure his love was returned, but there was a prior claim to it which another held. All the ballads that Keppell sung were those that told of love requited and unrequited, pathetic stories of this life's sorrows, measured by the human breath in a few lines only, every word, though, having a world of meaning.

He sang these songs because he thought they touched his own sad love story, and perhaps hers. He laid considerable stress on the touching lines in "Alice, Where Art Thou?"

> I've sought thee by lakelet,
> I've sought thee on the hill,
> And on the pleasant wildwood
> When winds blew cold and chill.

She caught the inspiration, and looked up into his face and smiled.

During the evening, the twain managed to slip away unperceived, and held a hurried *tête-à-tête* on the staircase landing, beyond the drawing-room.

"We're all so very pleased that you got through yesterday," said she.

"Yes, by a fluke, I fancy. Anyway I'm through, and it's now Charles Keppell, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.," he replied with a quite indifferent air.

"How delighted you must feel."

"Not a bit of it. I am as dull as ditch water and a good deal duller. My delight doesn't run on those kind of wheels. In one way, of course, I'm pleased. I've managed to satisfy my examiners, and its nice to feel I'm qualified, but, Alice," and here he became very sentimental, "my joy is wetted with the rainy dew of a keen love disappointment, my enthusiasm is damped, and all my hopes and ambition are absolutely drowned. Would I could pass the examination of your heart. How I would cram for it!"

"You have passed that, Charlie, and with honours, too," said she with considerable feeling.

"Then I want my parchment to certify that; I want you to be my wife, Alice."

"I want to be your wife, dearest—no, I shan't say 'want to be,' because the feeling is inherent with my great love for you, and is prompted from a heart which is all yours; but, as I have already told you, there is Jesse Conway to be included in the reckoning."

"Ah, that reminds me, Alice. I had a letter from him the other day threatening all sorts of things if I didn't cease to visit here at once. He is watching me at every turn."

Alice Charteris turned away, deadly pale.

"Have you the letter with you?"

"No; I tore it up into shreds, and threw the pieces on the fire. Why do you ask?" he inquired.

"Well, it may only be fancy, but I dreamt last night that he had written to you."

"Oh, and what did you dream I did in the matter? I hope you dreamt good things of me—dreamt, you know, that I gave him a good hiding for his impertinence, for that is what I should feel inclined to do if he wrote to me again. How can you think of marrying a man who has taken to drinking, and leads a common dog's club life?"

"Oh, I know. It is a horrible thought. But you don't know all, Charlie. He holds a mortgage on this house, and Jack, too, owes him thousands."

"Heavens! And you are to be their victim—you are to be sacrificed on the altar of this man's passion because of his money! By Heaven, Alice, you shall not! You shall not be thrown to him like a bone to a dog, and when he has done with you—when he has bared your heart of all feeling to prolong a miserable life—as yours would be if you married him—throw you into a corner, and leave you there to decay! Oh, my darling!"

The lights blazed away in the hall and about the staircase and landings, and everything looked so bright and cheerful, that not a guest there would have thought, surveying the palm-decorated and flower-bedecked house, that financial difficulty lodged there, and that Alice Charteris was a bond for borrowed money. Yet so it

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was. Poor Sir Lionel had lost the best part of a considerable fortune through the escapades of the National South African Company, and it was Jesse Conway's money that was tiding him and his family over the present financial pitfalls. Alice Charteris was a very pretty golden brown-haired girl, with deep blue eyes, and features that were regular and very attractive. She was a general favourite, and had known young Keppell a long time. The Charteris family knew quite well that Alice loved him and hated their "friend," and they tried their very best to delay all matters in connection with the latter's marriage demand for goods received.

The Charteris family doctor had been persuaded to certify that poor Alice had developed symptoms of weakness that required her to be carefully nursed in a warm climate for two years. But, of course, she didn't hesitate to wear Conway's magnificent and costly engagement-ring. That pleased Conway, and the Charteris family, too, immensely. It was one way out of the difficulty. As a matter of fact, Alice was a bright, cheerful, and healthy girl. They merely played up to Conway.

"Alice, I want you, my child," said Sir Lionel, hurrying from the drawing-room, and holding a telegram in his hand.

Miss Charteris hurried towards her father.

II.

"You really must not say such things, Mr. Keppell."

"I can't help it, Lady Charteris."

"Your success ought to goad you on to make a name for yourself in your profession."

"A name for myself? I don't want to make a name for myself. There's no fun in that. There would be something in my making a name for somebody else, somebody I loved. When I step into the arena of the world to fight with it for a name it shall be only when my success is fanned by the breeze of one woman's love, Lady Charteris."

Her ladyship sighed. She knew he meant Alice.

"Sir Lionel has received a telegram from her *fiancé* inquiring if you were here," said Lady Charteris, with a struggle, for Sir Lionel had asked her to perform an ungracious task, failing himself to summon courage.

"Would Mr. Conway, then, in his arrogance, assume the office of censor and limit the right of a host to invite anyone whom he thought fit? And would he dictate to a guest? Lady Charteris, his conduct is insulting to you, to Miss Charteris, and to me. I can avenge his insult by remaining where I am, unless it be your wish that I should withdraw and leave your house, in which case that cur should only be my victor for a few hours, for I declare I would go straight to the Lotus Club and horsewhip him."

"It isn't for me to make any comment on what might take place elsewhere, but I am sure, Mr. Keppell, you would be the last man in the world to make a scene here, and I am afraid that if Sir Lionel does not send an immediate reply to Mr. Conway to the effect—er——"

"That I am not here, Jesse Conway may take a cab and come straight on here and create a scene, I suppose you would say, Lady Charteris?" broke in the young doctor, who felt, not unnaturally, much angered. Had not Alice told him only a few minutes before of the straits the Charteris family were in it is more than likely he would have said something forcible in condemnation of such an unheard-of occurrence as the turning away of a guest to please the whim of the *fiancé* of the daughter of the house. Of course, he knew the true reason, and kept it to himself.

"Inform Sir Lionel, my lady, that he is at liberty to send his message worded in that way pleasing to Mr. Conway," said he, rising and bowing towards her respectfully.

"Mr. Conway is so very jealous, Mr. Keppell," said her ladyship, trying to find an excuse other than the right one, "and one does not like to thwart the wishes and feelings of lovers."

"But they are thwarted very frequently. Don't you think so?" said Keppell with pointed effect, having in mind the love affair of her own daughter, whose heart had been bartered away for a monetary consideration, painful though the transaction might have been to Sir Lionel and Lady Charteris.

"Ah, indeed, it is sad to think about it. You are without doubt quite correct, Mr. Keppell; but we are the creatures of circumstances, and the sorrows of the world are but little understood beyond the afflicted ring."

"It is the pride of these creatures which is to be blamed for the sorrows that follow in their trail."

"Not always. If people were to live on the honest side of life and stamp the face of their circumstances with the die of truth—I am referring to those who are passing through a period of tribulation—the world would have but very little sympathy for them. Hence the greater part of the world is living under a mask."

This conversation took place in the library—a small room where Sir Lionel did his writing. That gentleman presently joined them.

"This is more than painful, Mr. Keppell, but Mr. Conway is one of your jealous lovers, you know," and the dear old gentleman tried to smile as if it were a capital joke, whereas he never felt so deeply humiliated in his whole life.

"Pray, don't allude to it, Sir Lionel. Singularly enough, I was about to start for home. Lady Charteris has confided in me, and so far as you are concerned the matter is at an end."

"Excuse me, but I want to send a wire off. Here, I say, Watts! Hand this to the telegraph boy!"

A servant took the missive downstairs. It was a message to Conway to say that Keppell was not in the house.

III.

Keppell and Miss Charteris were standing together in the hall.

"Well, once again, good-bye, darling, and don't forget what I have told you, will you?"

"No, Charlie, I promise you faithfully. And you won't go near the Lotus Club?"

"If I should happen to drop in and I find Conway there, you must not set a bar about my lips and prevent me from saying a word or two to him. I promise you I shan't put myself to any trouble in trying to find out his whereabouts, but if Fate thrusts him upon me—well, that's another matter. But you, my darling, will never be his wife. Good-bye."

The door opened, and young Dr. Keppell was soon out of sight in the darkness of the night. The door was closed gently behind him. He had hardly proceeded twenty yards down the road when the people in the houses in quiet Linden Gardens were startled and horrified by the report of fire-arms. Three successive revolver shots, a man's dying groans, and all was over.

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The Charteris family had greater reason for thinking things than any other family in the road, and it was with alarm and fear and trembling that old Sir Lionel and the rest of the gentlemen rushed out of the house, regardless of head covering, and the fact that it was raining. They were followed by dozens of other gentlemen from the other residences, all of whom ran to the same spot, where they found a policeman and two or three people bending over a prostrate form—the body of a man. It happened in a dark spot, and the poor fellow's features were bespattered so with both mud and blood that they were quite unrecognisable.

Our young doctor friend was busy upon his knees doing what he could for this victim of somebody's revenge, and when Sir Lionel saw him, he threw up his hands and involuntarily exclaimed: "Thank God he is safe!" and at once ran back to the house to inform his wife and daughter.

"Bring him into my house!" said one of the bystanders.

"Is the poor fellow dead?" asked another.

"No, he is not dead," said Dr. Keppell.

"Then bring him into my house," repeated the first speaker.

Accordingly, the mournful procession was formed, and kind and willing hands bore the bleeding body across the road into the opposite house.

Water and sponges were quickly handed to the young but fully qualified Æsculapian, who washed all the blood and dirt off the man's face. He reeled back.

"Good Heaven! It is Jesse Conway!"

IV.

"You see, Alice, it is like this. When a man is finally passed and he receives his conjoint diploma, he has to make a declaration that he will use his best efforts to save human life. It is an oath, and oaths are binding on some consciences. Now you know the reason why I have saved my rival's life. It went against the grain, for had he died no difficulty would have placed itself in the way of our getting married. I knew I was pulling him round and saving his life to marry you—think of it. Wasn't it maddening? But I did my duty, and my reward is the highest fee ever paid to a medical man in all his natural. In fact, all the notes and gold in the Bank of England couldn't pay back that fee. It is you, Alice! you! you!" cried the doctor, with rapturous joy, locking Miss Charteris in his arms, and imprinting kiss after kiss on her hot and suffused cheek.

"He has turned out, after all, an awfully good fellow, now hasn't he?"

"He's a brick. We'll pass over the *raison d'être* of the man shooting him—that's their own affair, although the fellow's at liberty, and Conway knows him well—and come to our first meeting when he recovered consciousness. How he escaped death is a marvel! Two of the three bullets found their way into his body, and we extracted those at the hospital; but when he fell his head crashed against the kerbstone, and literally split it open. However, he spotted me at the bedside——"

"Remember, Charlie, you are now a doctor, and you shouldn't use such slang," playfully interrupted his little sweetheart.

"Ah, well, it was only yesterday, I might say, that I assumed the frock coat—that visible and outward sign of man's mistake. Well, he recognised me. I asked him the usual questions, to which he replied in proper form. I told him that he was under me as my patient, and the tears rolled down his cheeks. He could hardly believe his eyes. I never saw such a change in any man. 'You've saved my life?' said he. I nodded, but not quite so ungraciously. He then told me the whole story about the shooting business, a bit one day and a bit on another. But it was only this morning—he's leaving hospital to-morrow—that he asked for leave to send for you. Little did I dream it was to release you from your engagement, and to hand you over to me."

The attempt on his life brought about Conway's reformation. From a wild and dissolute man, he became a worthy member of the community.

Three months later Dr. Charles Keppell led his sweet and bonny bride to the altar. Conway was at the ceremony, and the cynosure of many wondering eyes. On the evening before the wedding he had done the graceful act of presenting Sir Lionel with a receipt—the cancellation note of his liability. It represented a present of £20,000.

Mulvy Ouseley.

DAN LENO'S ½d.
½d. COMIC JOURNAL,
EVERY TUESDAY.

WHAT DO DREAMS MEAN?

Who has not at one time or another had some curious dream, the significance of which has perplexed him? Some dreams are caused by an overheated imagination or an impaired digestion, and others are so trivial as not to cause any grounds for a second thought being bestowed upon them.

On the other hand, there are many dreams which have an unquestionable significance. Many of them are influenced by our daily actions and thoughts, and frequently we find ourselves doing in our dreams what we would do in our daily life. These exercise our minds, and if we only knew what they portend we might be able to avoid events that afterwards come to pass. The history of the world is full of instances where dreams of a prophetic character have taken place, and the belief in them is shared by scientific and intelligent writers in every part of the world.

Occasionally a so-called dream book or two has been published pretending to give an explanation of these curious phenomena, but, as we all know, most of them are absolutely unreliable and are nothing but catchpenny publications.

We recently made the acquaintance of a lady who has made the laws of Oneirology a life study, and her explanations we have found to be singularly true in cases upon which we have consulted her. She has the reputation of being the most expert person in the world in this science. Accordingly we have made arrangements with her to give the fullest information to any reader of this paper who cares to send asking her advice. Readers should be very careful to explain in the fullest manner the whole extent of their dream. Madame Georges will reply, giving a full explanation.

Readers should address their letters to "Dreams," c/o. *Short Stories* Offices, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C., and inclose six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

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GREAT - WAR - COMPETITION.

FIRST PRIZE - - £5 | **25 Prizes of Handsome Books.**
Five Prizes of £1 each. | **25 Gold-plated Pencil-cases.**

In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

HERE is the last set of pictures. Solve as many as you can, then place them with the other four sheets and post the lot in an envelope marked "War" to the Editor of *Short Stories*, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to arrive not later than Tuesday, June 14th.

When sending your attempt may we ask you to inclose a small donation to the Fresh Air Fund? Ninepence pays for a day's holiday for one child, and £8 2s. for a party of 200.

PERSON.

No. 33.....

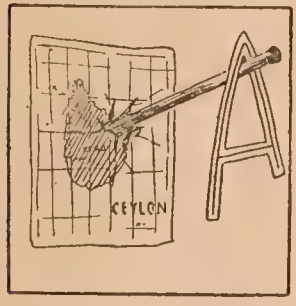
WARSHIP.

No. 34.....

PLACE.

No. 35.....

PLACE.



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PERSON.

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PLACE.

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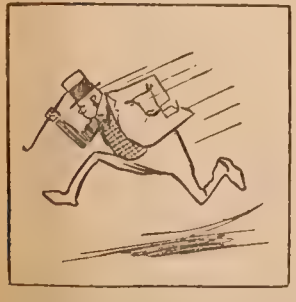
PERSON.



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WAR COMPETITION.

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PLACE.

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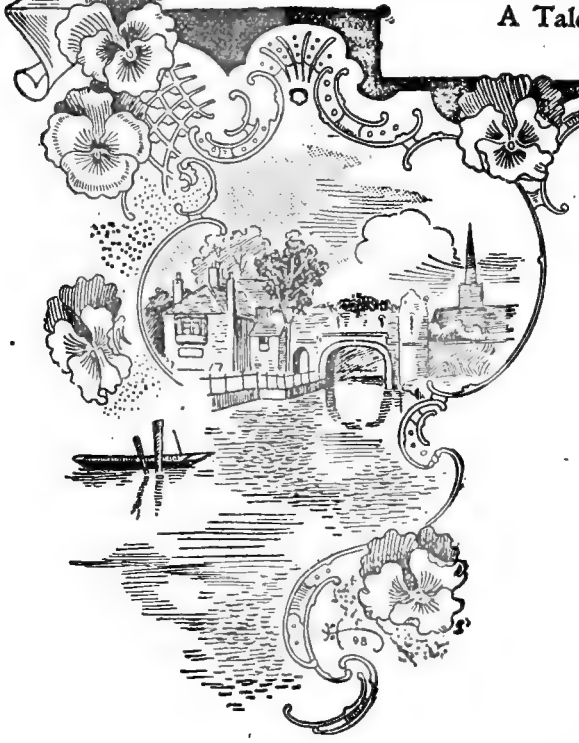
THE HORSEMAN IN THE AIR.

A Tale of the American Civil War.



One sunny afternoon in the autumn of the year 1861, a soldier lay in a clump of laurel by the side of a road in Western Virginia. He lay at full length upon his chest, his feet resting upon the toes, his head upon his left forearm. His extended left hand loosely grasped his rifle. But for the somewhat methodical disposition of his limbs, and a slight regular movement of the cartridge box at the back of his belt, he might have been thought to be dead. But he was asleep at his post of duty, and if detected would be dead shortly afterwards.

The clump of laurels in which the criminal lay was in an angle of the road, which, after ascending southward a steep aclivity for two miles, turned sharply to the west at that point, running along the summit for perhaps fifty yards. There it turned southward again, and went zigzagging downward through the forest. At the point of that second angle was a large flat rock, jutting out from the ridge to the northward, overlooking the deep valley from which the road descended. The rock capped a high cliff; a stone dropped from its outer edge would have fallen sheer down one thousand feet on to the top of the pines. The soldier's station was on another spur of the same cliff. Had he been awake he would have commanded a view, not only of the short arm of the road and the jutting rock, but of the entire profile of the cliff below it. It might well have made him giddy to look.

The country was wooded everywhere, except at the bottom of the valley to the northward, where there was a small natural meadow, through which flowed a stream scarcely visible from the valley's rim. This open ground looked hardly larger than an ordinary house-yard, but was really many acres in extent. Its green was more vivid than that of the inclosing forest. Away beyond it rose a line of giant cliffs, similar to those upon which we are supposed to stand in our survey of the scene, and through which the road has somehow made its climb to the summit. The configuration of the valley, indeed, was such, that from our point of observation, it seemed entirely shut in, and one could not but have wondered how the road which found a way out of it, had found a way into it, and whence came and whither went the stream that parted the meadow two thousand feet below.

No country is so wild and difficult, but men will make it a theatre of war; concealed in the forest at the bottom of that military rat-trap, in which half a hundred men in possession of the exits might have starved an army to submission, lay five regiments of Federal infantry. They had marched all the previous day and night, and were resting. At nightfall they would take to the road again, climb to the place where their unfaithful sentinel now slept, and, descending the other slope of the ridge, fall upon a camp of the enemy at about midnight. Their hope was to surprise him, for the road led to the rear of his camp. In case of failure their position would be perilous in the extreme; and fail they would were accident or vigilance to apprise him of the movement.

The sleeping sentinel in the clump of laurels was a young Virginian, named Carter Druse. He was the son of wealthy parents—an only child—and had known such luxury and civilisation as wealth and taste were able to command in the mountain country of Western Virginia thirty years ago. His home was but a few miles from where he now lay. One morning he rose from the breakfast-table and said quietly, but gravely:

"Father, a Union regiment has arrived at Grafton. I am going to join it."

The father lifted his head, looked at his son a moment in silence, and replied:

"Go, Carter, and whatever may happen I hope that you will do what you conceive to be your duty. Should

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we both live to the end of the war, we will speak further of the matter. Your mother, as the physician has informed you, is in a critical condition; at the best she cannot be with us longer than a few weeks, but that time is precious. It would be better not to disturb her."

So Carter Druse, bowing reverently to his father, who returned the salute with stately courtesy, left the home of his childhood to go soldiering. By conscience and courage, by deeds of devotion and daring, he soon commended himself to his fellows and his officers, and it was to these qualities and to some knowledge of the country that he owed his present perilous duty at the extreme outpost. Nevertheless, fatigue had been stronger than resolution, and he had fallen asleep.

What good or bad angel came in a dream to rouse him from his state of crime, who shall say? Without a movement, without a sound, in the profound silence of the late afternoon, some invisible messenger of Fate touched with unsealing finger the eyes of his consciousness—whispered into the ear of his spirit the mysterious awakening word which no human lips have ever spoken, no human memory has ever recalled. He quietly raised his forehead from his arm and looked between the laurels, instinctively closing his right hand about the stock of his rifle.

His first feeling was one of keen artistic delight. On the colossal pedestal of the cliff, motionless, at the extreme edge of the capping rock, sharply outlined against the sky, was an equestrian statue of impressive dignity. The figure of the man sat the figure of the horse, straight and soldierly. The face of the rider, turned slightly to the left, showed only an outline of temple and beard; he was looking downward to the bottom of the valley. Magnified by its lift against the sky, and by the soldier's sense of the formidableness of a near enemy, the group appeared of colossal size.

For an instant Druse had a strange, half-defined feeling that he had slept to the end of the war, and was looking upon a noble work of art reared upon that commanding eminence to commemorate the deeds of a heroic past of which he had been an inglorious part. The feeling was dispelled by a slight movement of the horse, which, without shifting its feet, had drawn its body slightly backward from the verge; the man remaining immobile as before. Wide awake, and keenly alive to the significance of the situation, Druse now brought the butt of his rifle against his cheek by cautiously pushing the barrel forward through the bushes, cocked the piece, and, glancing through the sights, covered a vital spot in the horseman's breast. A touch upon the trigger, and all would have been well with Carter Druse. At that instant the horseman turned his head and looked in the direction of his crouching foeman—seemed to look into his very face, into his eyes.

Is it, then, so terrible to kill an enemy in war?—an enemy who has surprised a secret vital to the safety of oneself and one's comrades?—an enemy more formidable for his knowledge than all his army for its numbers? Carter Druse grew deadly pale; he shook in every limb. His hand fell away from his weapon, his head slowly dropped until his face rested on the leaves in which he lay. This courageous and hardy soldier was nearer to swooning from intensity of emotion and excitement.

It was not for long; in another moment his face was raised; his hands resumed their places on the rifle; his forefinger sought the trigger. Mind, heart, and eyes were clear, conscience and reason found. He could not hope to capture that enemy; to alarm him would but send him dashing to his camp with his fatal news. The duty of the soldier was plain; the man must be shot dead from ambush—without warning, without a moment's preparation, with never so much as an unspoken prayer he must be sent to his account.

But no—there is a hope; he may have discovered nothing—perhaps he is admiring the sublimity of the landscape. If permitted, he may turn and ride carelessly away in the direction whence he came. Surely it will be possible to judge at the instant of his withdrawing whether he knows. Druse turned his head and looked down. Below he saw creeping across the green meadow a sinuous line of the figures of men and horses—some foolish commander was permitting the men of his escort to water their horses in the open—in plain view from a hundred summits.

Druse withdrew his eyes from the valley and fixed them again upon the group of man and horse in the sky, and again it was through the sights of his rifle. He was calm now. His teeth were firmly but not rigidly closed; his nerves were as tranquil as a sleeping babe's—not a tremor affected any muscle of his body; his breathing, until suspended in the act of taking aim, was regular and slow. Duty had silenced conscience; the spirit had said to the body, "Be still." He fired.

* * * * *

At this moment an officer of the Federal force, who, in the spirit of adventure or in quest of knowledge, had left the hidden bivouac in the valley, and, climbing the slope, had made his way to the lower edge of a small open space near the foot of the cliff, was considering what he had to gain by pushing his exploration farther. At the distance of a quarter-mile before him, but apparently at a stone's throw, rose from its fringes of pines the gigantic face of rock, towering to so great a height above that it made him giddy to look up to where its edge cut a sharp, rugged line against the sky. Lifting his eyes to the dizzy altitude of its summit, the officer saw an astonishing sight—a man on horseback riding down into the valley through the air.

Straight upward sat the rider, in military fashion, with a firm seat in the saddle, a strong clutch upon the rein to hold his charger from too impetuous a plunge. From his bare head his long hair streamed upward, waving like a plume. His right hand was concealed in the cloud of the horse's lifted mane. The animal's body was as level as if every hoof stroke encountered the resistent earth. Its motions were those of a wild gallop, but even as the officer looked they ceased, with all the legs thrown sharply forward as in the act of alighting from a leap. But this was a flight.

The officer was filled with amazement and terror by this apparition of a horseman in the air. Almost at the same instant he heard a crashing sound in the trees—a sound that died without an echo, and all was still. Pulling himself together he ran rapidly obliquely backward from the cliff to a point a half-mile from its foot. Thereabout he expected to find his man; and he naturally failed. In the fleeting instant of his vision his imagination had been so wrought upon by the apparent grace and ease and intention of the horse and rider, that it did not occur to him that the line of march of aerial cavalry must necessarily be directly downward, and that he would find the object of his search at the very foot of the cliff. An hour later he returned to camp.

This officer was a wise man; he knew better than to tell an incredible truth. He said nothing of what he had seen.

* * * * *

After firing his shot, Private Carter Druse reloaded

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his rifle and resumed his watch. Ten minutes had hardly passed when a Federal sergeant crept cautiously to him on hands and knees. Druse neither turned his head nor looked at him, but lay without motion or sign of recognition.

"Did you fire?" the sergeant whispered.

"Yes."

"At what?"

"A horse. It was standing on yonder rock—pretty far out. You see it is no longer there. I am a great marksman; you know I once shot a match with Washington's ghost and beat him."

The sergeant was shocked and startled. He looked searchingly at Druse. The man's face was white; his eyes were restless, and glittered with a strange, uncanny light. The sergeant, still on hands and knees, involuntarily backed a little way from him.

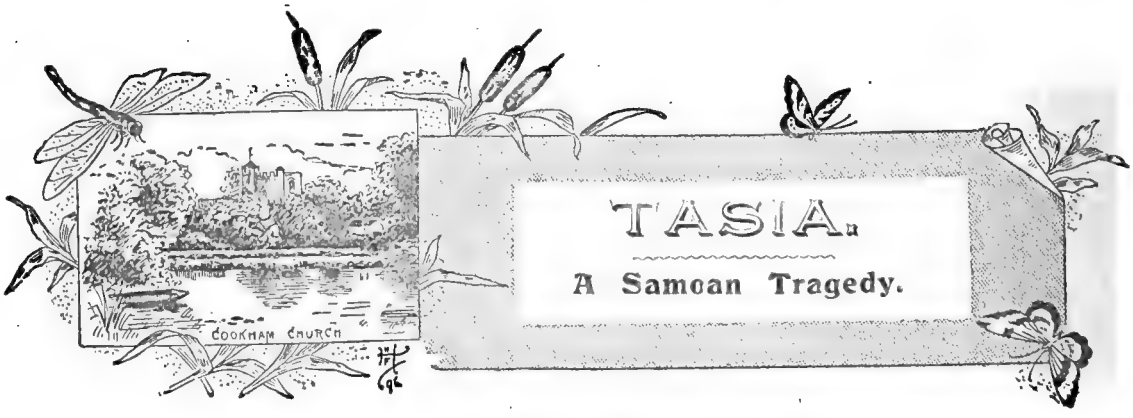
"Look here, Druse," he said, after a moment's silence, "it's no use making a mystery. I order you to report. Was there anybody—anybody at all—except the horse?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"My father."

The sergeant rose to his feet, and walked rapidly down the road towards the valley. H. T. P.



I had stopped for a day or two at the town of Apia on my way back to my home at Satu, far away from Apian civilisation. I had strayed in the direction of the little building that does duty for a police-court, and curiosity impelled me to enter.

At a shabby little desk sat a young Englishman, who was acting as magistrate; in front stood a native constable in charge of a female prisoner.

She was a fine, well-built woman. Her costume consisted only of a scanty white garment, which had probably belonged to some European lady. She had a necklace of red berries, and her jet-black hair—which reached down to her waist—was adorned with red blossoms.

"Back again, Tasia?" asked the magistrate kindly.

"*Tofa, my fieni,*" sang the prisoner in the most unconcerned manner. The crowd of brown-skinned natives, inside and outside the court-house, laughed merrily. The magistrate had some difficulty in preserving fitting judicial gravity.

The words formed part of a Samoan song, which, although of recent introduction, could be heard in any part of the group of islands. They mean "Good-bye, my friend," and the song was an expression of regret at the departure of a friend, but was sung on any occasion when a pretext could be found for singing it.

"She's been like that for a week, night and day, Alii," explained the constable. "She makes such a noise that her relatives won't have her in the house."

Considering that the Samoans are the most vociferous of people, this was rather a strong condemnation. The magistrate looked puzzled; there was no charge against the woman, the constable had taken her to the court because he did not know what to do with her. After having reflected, the magistrate decided to commit her to prison for a month for disorderly conduct.

"She will be well treated among the women," he explained, "and by that time her relatives may relent."

When I returned to Satu, I told a friend of mine, an old trader, the incident of the police-court at Apia, among other events of my journey.

"So you saw Tasia, did you?" he said with a smile. "Poor Tasia!"

I was not surprised that he knew the woman; he knew everybody.

"What is the matter with her?" I asked. "There is some story connected with her, I am certain, and I have no doubt that you know it. I should like to hear it."

"There *is* a story, and I will tell it to you," he replied, settling back in his rough chair. "It goes back to the time of the civil war among the Samoans—not many years ago, either. Apia was rather different then; you could have seen war parties marching through the town with the heads of slain enemies in their hands! Firing was going on everywhere, and occasionally a bullet from the bush just outside the town would come whizzing through the streets in a most unpleasant manner.

"But there were not many killed. The Samoans fired at anything that happened to be in front of them, whether it was a man's head or the trunk of a tree; but, as they scarcely ever hit the mark at which they aimed, the number killed by bullets was very small. There was a good deal of noise about their battles, but you couldn't exactly call them sanguinary; they had no idea of straight shooting.

"Tasia was not much of a beauty; but she was plump

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CORPULENCY THE THIEF OF TIME.
RAPID METHOD OF BANISHING SUPERABUNDANT FAT.

That procrastination is the Thief of Time is a truism so obvious that it has no claim to be regarded as an epigram. To more practical purpose it may be urged that Corpulency is, in very many cases, the parent of procrastination. The putting off till to-morrow what can be done to-day certainly becomes a mental habit, but it is unquestionably very frequently begotten by physical conditions which render exertion irksome. That in the majority of cases procrastination is easily curable is one of the considerations suggested by a perusal of Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency, and the Cure," whose remarkable popularity is evidenced by the recent issue of the 18th edition. The enormous mass of correspondence which this expert has accumulated, and many extracts from which are included in the 256 pages of this little book, forms the most valuable addition which has yet been made to the literature of obesity. It is specially notable that a very large proportion of Mr. Russell's correspondents who have undergone his course of treatment for the reduction of obesity emphasise the renewed vigour which they have experienced after passing through the process —a wonderfully rapid one, according to this method— of banishing their superabundant fat. The universal adoption of Mr. Russell's system by corpulent persons of both sexes would increase, by a stupendous percentage, the working capacity of mankind. The rapidly-growing popularity of the treatment is due, doubtless, to the author having discarded all the obsolete notions about semi-starvation being requisite to ensure comely and comfortable slimness. It is certain that the more the marvellous possibilities of Mr. Russell's system become known, the less will be the tolerance for the laziness of people who decline to reduce their overweight by the pleasant and facile means which are described in this little book, which can be had, post free, by forwarding three penny stamps to Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—*Liverpool Daily Mercury.*

A POSITIVE REMEDY FOR CORPULENCE.
A SPANISH COUNT REDUCES HIS WEIGHT 34LB. IN 22 DAYS.

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. There has recently been issued a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled, "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), and is a cheap issue (only threepence), published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes: "Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid — 'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos=*i.e.*, 34lb.' Another writes—'So far (six weeks from the commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes—'I am just half the size.' A fourth—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8lb. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes—'A reduction of 18lb. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again, a lady says—'It reduced me considerably, not only in body, but all over.'" The author is very positive. He says—"Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee that you have lost 2lb. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations." — *Cork Herald.*

EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS
IN THE
TREATMENT OF OBESITY

Our corpulent readers will be glad to learn how to positively lose two stone in about a month with the greatest possible benefit in health, strength and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular paradox that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state, with increased activity of brain, digestive and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto, yet notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one or two pounds daily, as the weighing-machine will prove. Thus there is no suggestion of starvation. It is an undoubted success, and the author, who has devoted years of study to the subject, guarantees a noticeable reduction within twenty-four hours of commencing the treatment. This is different with other diseases, for the patient in some cases may go for weeks without being able to test whether the physician has rightly treated him, and may have derived no real or apparent improvement in health. Here, we repeat, the author guarantees it in twenty-four hours, the scale to be the unerring recorder. The treatment aims at the actual root of the disease, so that the superfluous fat does not return when discontinuing the treatment. It is perfectly harmless. We advise our readers to call the attention of stout friends to this, because, sincerely, we think they ought to know. For their information we may say that on sending three penny stamps, a book entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), containing a reprint of press notices from some hundreds of medical and other journals (British and Foreign) and other interesting particulars, including the "recipe," can be had from a Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—Extract from *The Belfast News Letter.*

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and obliging, and, as she was the adopted daughter of a chief, she was of some importance.

"I was in Apia at the time of the trouble, helping in my friend's shop; we were very busy supplying the natives with salt beef and other things. Tasia used to come in the shop to buy various articles, and as I was always obliging—and an old man—she became very friendly with me, and used to tell me all about the warfare.

"Our friendship grew stronger, and sometimes when the shop was closed I went to the house where her father lived—I mean where he lived when he wasn't away fighting.

"Before the war broke out, Tasia had been engaged to an Aana chief. Everything was settled, and the two young people thought they were on the high road to happiness, when the internal trouble began. The result was that Tasia's betrothed was forced to fight against her people, and the chance of marriage became very remote.

"But that was not all. Tasia was afraid that her father and her betrothed would meet in some skirmish, which would mean the certain death of one. Her father, forgetful of Tasia's feelings, had vowed that he would decorate his door-post with the head of Inasi; while the latter had assured the weeping girl, at one of their secret meetings in the bush, that her father's head would undoubtedly become the trophy of one of their young chiefs. Her father was a great chief and a powerful opponent of the rebels, and the young warriors burnt with a desire to obtain his head.

"When I saw poor Tasia the next time, she had grown quite thin with grief. I tried to cheer her up. She burst into tears and confided her trouble to me.

"'If Inasi should kill my father,' she sobbed, 'he can never marry me. There would be a feud of blood between the families. And my father is already talking of marrying me to the chief of Malie.'

"In the rebel camp, Inasi was getting into hot water because he would not give up his love for Tasia. He was willing to fight against her people, that was his duty; but he was not bound to give up his love for his betrothed—he *could not* do it, he said.

"There was one thing lacking to complete Inasi's claim to the dignity of a bold warrior; he had not brought in a head. He had been in many skirmishes, and had fired off his gun so rapidly that the barrel had grown too hot to hold; but, although he may have killed some of the enemy, he had never brought home a head in triumph. The younger men began to sneer at him, and even the older ones became very serious about it.

"'Inasi has in his veins,' remarked an old chief at a council, 'the blood of our great ancestor Tooaau, who swam on a stick from Fiji to these islands. None of the race has ever before shown a lack of courage.'

"Inasi could not explain that he did not strive for the head of one of his enemies, lest it might be the head of Tolua, Tasia's father. But the shrewd old men understood how it was, and they finally hit upon a plan which would serve two ends. They called him before them.

"'Inasi,' the leader said, 'it is time that you proved your courage. It is our will that you bring us the head of our great enemy, Tolua. He is a foeman worthy of your steel!'

"Inasi's heart sank within him, but he knew that he must obey. Henceforth, however, life would have no joy or hope for him.

"The great battle took place, and the rebels were driven off. In the evening I went down to Tasia's home, where there was a great gathering of blood-stained warriors.

"I will not harrow your feelings with details of the ghastly trophies. I half closed my eyes as I made my way to Tasia, who sat in a corner, sad and silent, making the kava. That was a duty which devolved upon her as maiden of the family.

"'What is the matter, Tasia?' I asked.

"'My heart is heavy with a double burden,' she replied. 'My father has not returned from the battle; and I can hear no news of Inasi, save that he fought bravely, and slew many of our warriors.'

"Shortly afterwards a fitful blaze of the cocoa-nut shell fire illumined the interior, and I saw a dusky hand thrust through the matted side of the house. A round, reddened object was thrown violently into the circle of boasting chiefs.

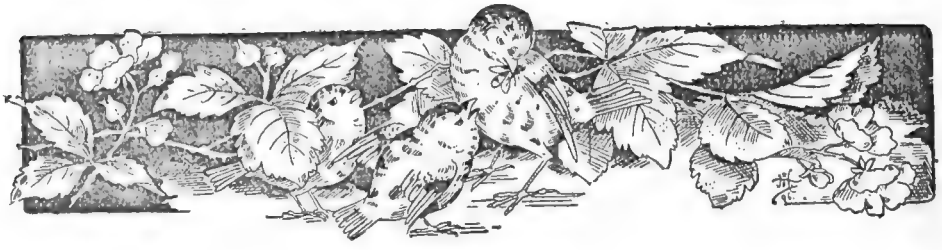
"'Inasi's last alofa to Tasia,' cried a loud voice.

"There was a sudden silence. Then the Samoans sprang to their feet, and rushed into the darkness in search of the intruder, leaving me alone with Tasia.

"The object had rolled along the floor, and stopped in front of the maiden. I looked at the thing, and a shiver went through me. I turned my eyes to Tasia. I had recognised the head of Tolua.

"She was gazing at it in horror. She did not scream; she did not utter a sound of any kind; but her hands dropped helplessly into her lap. The shock upset her reason, and she has never uttered a sensible word since.

"The same night a gunshot was heard within the rebel lines, and Inasi was found lying beside his rifle, which had rendered him this last service." G. D.



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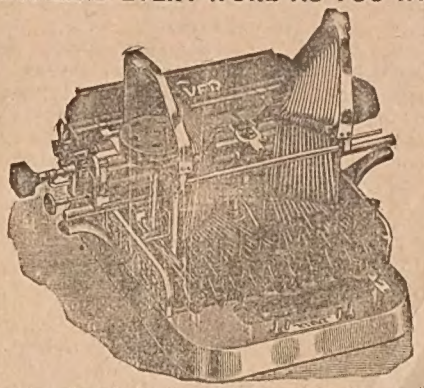

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LAST WRITTEN . . . . . FIRST READ.

ALL attempts in the great War Competition must be sent in by Tuesday next, June 14th. If you cannot solve all the pictures, do your best, for the prizes go to those who are most nearly correct, if no one gets the whole lot right. At the same time I should like to suggest that you inclose with your attempt a trifle for the FRESH AIR FUND. A shilling postal order you won't miss very much, and it will more than cover all the expenses of a child's outing for one day. It is a good opportunity for you to show your generosity.

H. M. asks: "Which novel has had the largest sale during the last century?" ——— "Robinson Crusoe," by Daniel Defoe, published in 1719, and which is even now as popular as ever. Next in popularity come the Waverley novels, by Sir Walter Scott.

A. B. C.—Aerated bread is bread not fermented with yeast, but mechanically charged with carbonic acid gas.

DOLPHIN writes: "Can you tell me how to make an Æolian harp?" ——— Stretch eight or ten catgut strings of varying thickness, all tuned in unison, over a wooden shell or box, and place it in such a position that the wind would be able to pass between the strings. The sounds produced by the rising and falling of the wind in passing over the strings will be of a drowsy and lulling character.

G. H.—The original meaning of the word "insect" implies a division in the middle, like an ant. The meaning, however, has been extended, for it includes spiders, which have no division in the middle.

BAY.—According to those people engaged in the corn trade, twenty per cent. more bread is consumed in cold weather than when it is mild.

R. G.—Yes, the Queen has the right to pardon a condemned person of her own free will without consulting anyone, but although the right exists, according to constitutional usage, it is never exercised without the advice of the Home Secretary.

A. T.—The sound of the human voice can be heard at a great distance in the Arctic regions. Captain Parry states that he often heard the voices of persons conversing in an ordinary tone at the distance of a mile. It is evident that, even putting aside other inconveniences, the North would be quite unsuitable for a honeymoon trip.

E. A.—It certainly is not correct to write upon a post-card a communication requiring an answer. Probably that is the reason you did not receive one.

DILEMMA.—The British Navy is certainly far ahead of any other nation so far as the number of its torpedo-boat destroyers are concerned, having no fewer than ninety-seven, whereas Russia, who comes second in this respect, only possesses twenty-nine, and France comes third with eighteen.

W. S. T. asks: "Is it correct to call the lucky owner of ten millions a 'billionaire'?" ——— No; that is quite a wrong idea. In order to be a billionaire a man would have to possess a million millions.

PUMICE STONE.—The bulk of this material comes from the Lipari Islands, and the trade in it was done almost exclusively from Leghorn. But the islands are nearer to Sicily, and Messina is wresting the trade from Leghorn. By their activity the people of the latter place secured for themselves several industries which could have been done better from some other town; now, in the general awakening of Italy, the Livornesi are losing them. The price of pumice stone varies; as much as £30 per ton has been paid for the superior kinds.

FAIR, FAT, AND FORTY.—The average length of a person's life in this country is about forty-three. Do not be alarmed, however. Remember the average is brought down considerably by the tremendous mortality amongst infants.

L. K.—The estimated number of blind persons in Europe is 302,000 in round figures. Of these, 192,000 are subjects of the Tsar; that is, one out of every 500.

GOLD.—Some years ago a number of careful experiments were made to ascertain the loss by wear in coins of the realm during a given period. The conclusions arrived at included the following. In 100 years a like number of sovereigns lost £3 9s. 8½d. of their value, while in £100 of half-crowns the loss was £13 11s. 8½d. I give these details on the authority of other people; such few sovereigns and half-crowns as find their way into the editorial possession do not stay there long enough to enable me to make any reliable experiment on my own account.

S. S.—Sedan chairs were first seen in England in 1581, but it was not until sixty years later that they came into general use. One used in the reign of James I. by the Duke of Buckingham caused great indignation, and the people exclaimed that he was employing his fellow creatures to do the work of beasts. In 1634 Sir Francis Duncomb obtained the sole privilege to use, let and hire a number of such covered chairs for fourteen years.

F. A. R.—No, the Queen has never visited any of her colonies, nor any part of Asia, Africa, or America.

B. N.—The delicious drink known as "pulque" is obtained from a plant called maquez. It grows in the uplands of Mexico, 7,000 feet above the sea level, and it is also found in the plains near Apam, about sixty miles from the city of Mexico. One plant will yield about twelve pints a day. A legend concerning pulque is to the effect that it was first extracted by a Toltec of the royal blood, who, wishing to obtain favour in the king's eyes, sent him a quantity by the hand of his daughter. The king tasted the drink, and was so delighted with it that he graciously consented to keep the quantity sent; he also decided to keep the daughter. It is to be hoped that the Toltec obtained the favourable notice which he desired.

LEFT.—In fifty-four cases out of 100 the left leg is stronger than the right. Which shows that when you are told to put your best foot forward, the left foot is the right one for the purpose.

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IN all Prize Competitions the Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entertained when once a competition is finished and the result published.

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Dr. Thurston, Licentiate, of the Royal College of Physicians, writes November 16th: "Knowing the formulæ from which KAPUTINE is compounded, I unhesitatingly recommend its use in preference to crude Antifibrin and other synthetic drugs which, unfortunately for sufferers, are so commonly used for Headache, and which have undoubtedly injurious effects on the Heart, Brain, and Vescicle tissues generally."

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'NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.'

This little prayer of our childhood, so simple, so direct, so full of unquestioning faith: what an innumerable multitude of children have said it at their mother's knee for generations out of mind, what a white-robed host of them are saying it now—night after night as bed-time comes round.

Lots of us oldsters, whose heads are grizzled and grey this New Year's Eve, remember when this tender petition was taught us as though it were but yesterday. In fact, I hope we are not ashamed to repeat it now. The great American statesman, Daniel Webster, never laid his head upon the pillow without having first uttered aloud this infant orison, "Now I lay me down to sleep."

And—so far at least as concerns the children—they *do* sleep. Not a quiver in their healthy nerves, no haunting persistence of the day's troubles, no fear for any the morning may bring. They do what they lay themselves down to do—*they sleep.*

But when one lays himself down and cannot sleep; when, the mind being full of thought, every faculty remains at "*Attention!*" like a file of soldiers on drill; or when Pain fills the bed with thorns—ah then there is another tale to tell. Whistle for your dog and he comes; whistle for Sleep and he mocks you as he flies away.

Preliminary to sound and healthful sleep there must be at least five conditions: First, fatigue of the nervous system; second, certain changes in the state of the blood; third, a cessation of all things which stimulate the nerves; fourth, an exhaustion of the attention; fifth, freedom from pain.

Now here we have Mr. Hunt, of Derby, telling us that for a long time together he was often obliged to leave his bed in the night and walk about the room. When we ask him why, he answers with the following letter:

"For many years," he says, "I suffered from indigestion and dyspepsia. I had no relish for my meals, and after eating, was taken with pain about the chest and shoulders. I was constantly belching up a sour acid fluid, my food turning sour on my stomach. *I was frequently so bad in the night with pain that I had to get up and walk about the room.* I was never laid up with my ailment, but never free from pain. For years I continued like this, the doctors' and others' medicines doing me no good. One day I read in a book about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I got a bottle of this medicine from Mr. Roe, Temple Street, and after taking it found much benefit. I persevered with it and all the pain and discomfort left me. Since then, by taking an occasional dose, I keep free from my old complaint. You can publish this statement as you think fit. (Signed) E. Hunt, 3 Provident Street, Derby, November 27th, 1896."

"The people of America," says an eminent physician of that country, "have already gained for themselves the reputation of being a nation of dyspeptics; they are fast becoming a *nation of poor sleepers.* Indeed, dyspepsia and insomnia are quite commonly associated in the same individual."

There you have it in a fistful of words. Our friend Mr. Hunt lost his sleep because he was unable to digest his food. A double loss, as you will see. A loss of sleep and a loss of the strength he would had were it not for the perverted state of things in his stomach which transformed his bread and meat into forces that tortured him and threatened his life. A fearful sleep-killer is this same old dyspepsia. It cares nothing for all your cries and prayers. Men and women have committed suicide in the mental wildness and delirium produced by it. It tears the nerves as a tiger's claws might shred the skin.

One point now, and mark it well. If you suffer from the insomnia of dyspepsia don't take opium in any form; don't take the tempting bromides; don't take any drugs to make you sleep, for they merely cause dull unconsciousness, stupor—but *not* physiological sleep. Let 'em all alone. Take Mother Seigel's Syrup, which will cure the digestive trouble, and *then*, when you lay yourself down to sleep, you may enter that soft oblivion wherein Nature repairs the losses of the day—even as it is with little children.

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